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retro GAMER

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MEET MR MARIO
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
AS NINTENDO ENTERS A NEW ERA, WE CELEBRATE ITS GREATEST CREATOR



KONIX MULTISYSTEM
IN THE SEAT WITH THE WORLD'S ONLY EXISTING PROTOTYPE

WONDER BOY III
WHY THE HIT MASTER SYSTEM GAME REMAINS THE FRANCHISE'S BEST

THE END OF AN ERA
PSYGNOSIS
THE TRUTH: THE GAMES, SONY AND THE INCREDIBLE LEGACY



"IT'S A RIGHTEOUS ASS-KICKING"
JOHN CARMACK REVEALS WHY GAMERS STILL CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THE DOOM SERIES

25 YEARS OF FINAL FANTASY
YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO EVERY GAME IN THE RPG FRANCHISE

PILOT WINGS
DOES THIS SNES HIT STILL RULE THE SKIES?

RENEGADE
HOW BRUCE LEE INSPIRED YOSHIHISA KISHIMOTO'S ARCADE BRAWLER

PLUS: THE SCARIEST RETRO GAMES EVER

SILENT HILL 2 THE CREEPY SOUNDTRACK THAT CREATED A PS2 MASTERPIECE | **THE MIST** FROM HIT NOVELLA TO SCARY TEXT ADVENTURE | **REALMS OF THE HAUNTING** DISCOVER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN GREMLIN SPLICED THE FPS WITH THE POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE | **THE 7TH GUEST** THE MULTIMEDIA HORROR RELEASE THAT CHANGED CD-ROM GAMING

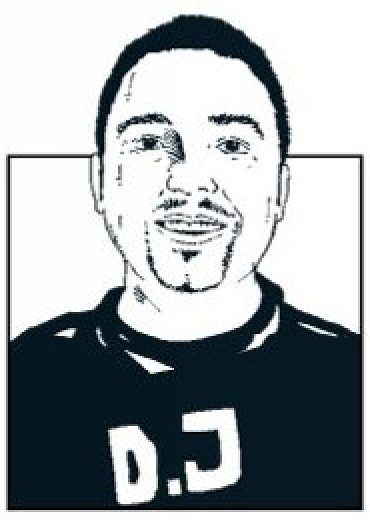
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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE PSYGNOSIS GAME



DARRAN JONES

From a development point of view, I'd have to say the immersive *G-Police*. From a publishing viewpoint, it was the amazing *Lemmings*.

Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
To The Moon

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT

Published, *Lemmings*. Its mix of platforming and puzzle gameplay felt fresh: gaming at its very best. Developed, I'll have to go for *WipEout*. It was a stunning racer with a super soundtrack.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently Playing:
Pitfall!

Favourite game of all time:
Pitfall!



CRAIG GRANNELL

It only published it, but *Lemmings* grabbed hold and didn't let go. And I still play *Shadow Of The Beast*'s fantastic soundtrack, if not the game.

Expertise:
Games that don't require 37 fingers to play

Currently playing:
Lots and lots of *Super Hexagon*

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



JASON KELK

The game I enjoyed most would be *Wiz 'n' Liz* with its mental speed and the cutesy wittle wabbits.

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Re-Bounder (C64)

Favourite game of all time:
Io



PAUL DAVIES

The first *WipEout*, it was awesome at the time. Failing that, *Fatal Rewind*.

Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Halo Reach

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



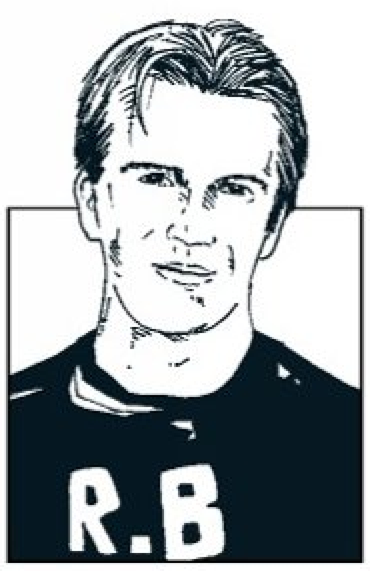
PAUL DRURY

The original *WipEout*. Thrillingly 'next generation', yet brutally tough in an old-school way. Suddenly my non-gaming mates wanted to know what that PlayStation thing was under my telly…

Expertise:
Rick Dickinson's beard

Currently playing:
Chimera (C64)

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



RICHARD BURTON

Sentinel Returns – a sequel to the absorbing (I thank you) puzzler of the Eighties. It's essentially more of the same but with lashings of atmospheric gloominess and terror.

Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense

Currently playing:
Super Meat Boy

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



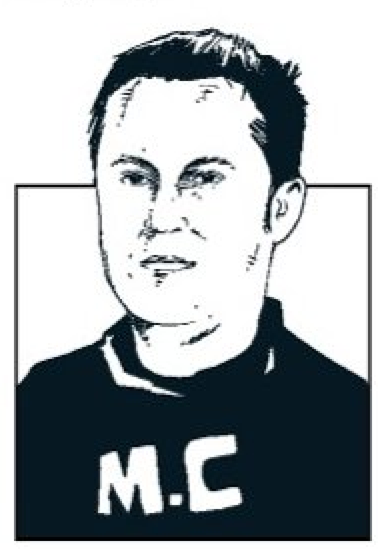
DAVID CROOKES

WipEout, without a doubt. I saw pictures on the PlayStation and instantly fell in love with it. *WipEout* was one of the first games I bought and its speed and 3D visuals blew me away. It was damn hard, though.

Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation

Currently playing:
Mario Kart 7

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



MARTYN CARROLL

Shadow Of The Beast III. The extra emphasis on tricky puzzles made this the most devious and brilliant entry in the *Beast* trilogy.

Expertise:
Sinclair stuff

Currently Playing:
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy

LOADING...



This issue marks a sad time for the UK games industry, and gaming as a whole. Studio Liverpool, or Psygnosis as many retro gamers know it, has recently been shut down by Sony. This is extremely sad, as the studio has been responsible for developing and releasing some of the most iconic games around, games that would often reach a global audience.

Colony Wars, G-Police, Nitro and the *WipEout* franchise are just a few of the games the studio has been personally responsible for over the years, but it also had a fantastic eye for publishing the games of other developers as well. Reflection Interactive's *Shadow Of The Beast* series, Bizarre Creation's *The Killing Game Show*, Art & Magic's *Agony*, Teeny Weeny Games' *Discworld*, and of course DMA Designs' *Lemmings*. The list just goes on and on. And let's not forget the fantastic artwork of Roger Dean, which adorned many a Psygnosis box, and this month's cover.

We may never know the real reasons why Sony decided to pull the plug on the Liverpool-based studio. All we know is that a part of our shrinking UK gaming heritage has died, and that the studio and developers involved have given us a large amount of gaming memories over the past 28 years.

Goodbye, Psygnosis. You will be missed.

Enjoy the magazine,

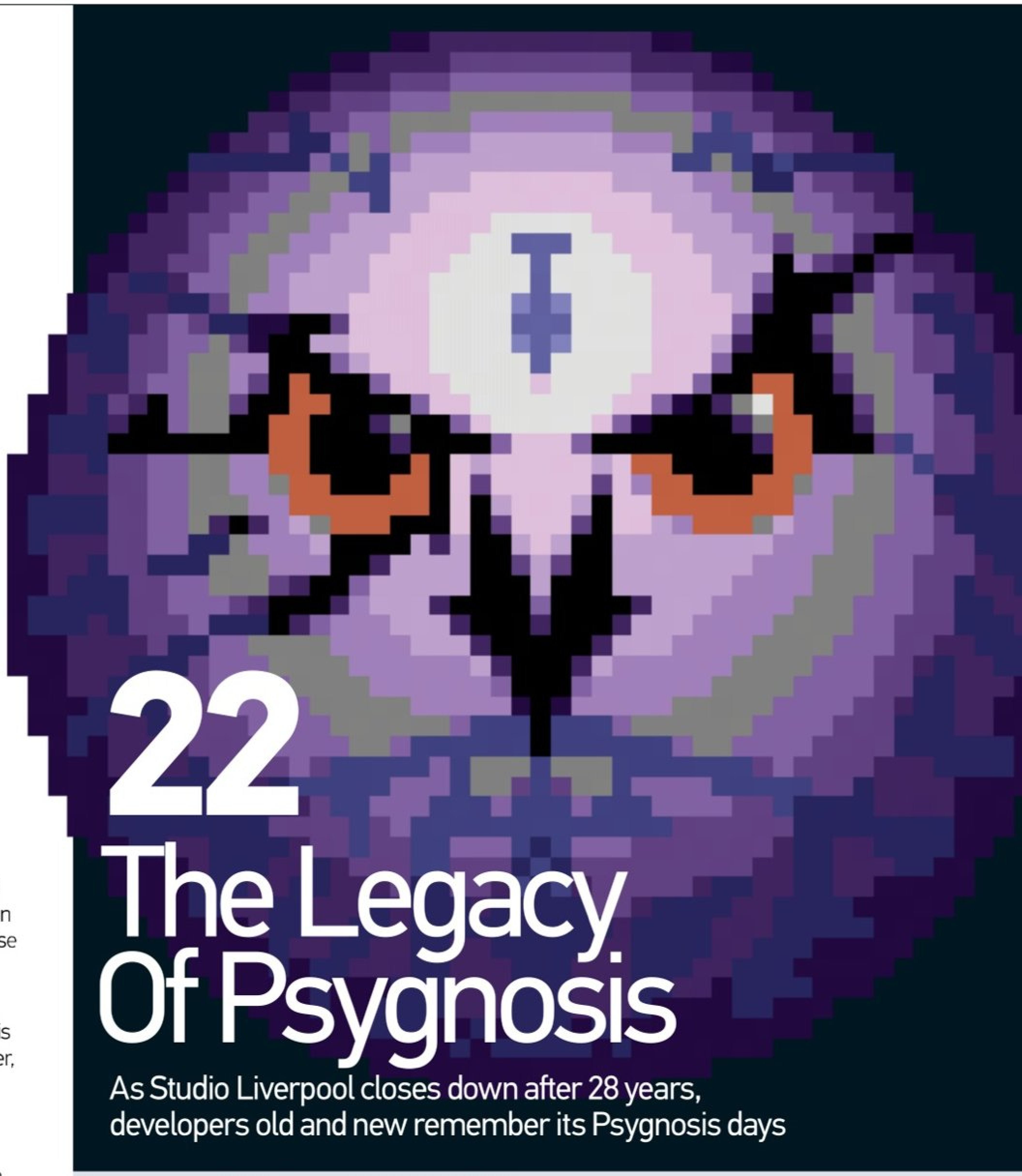


CONTENTS

>> Load 108 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

RETRO REVIVALS



In the hot seat this month…





"An exceptionally well designed game" Darran Jones



54 Classic Game

Darran Jones explains why *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* remains one of the Master System's best games

56 Final Fantasy

We revisit every single game in Square's 25-year old RPG franchise





37 Tales From The Retro Gamer Crypt…

Discover the secrets behind some of gaming's scariest releases



74 Renegade

Yoshihisa Kishimoto and Mike Lamb discuss the creation of this arcade hit

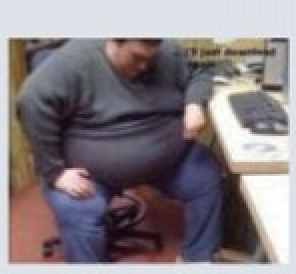
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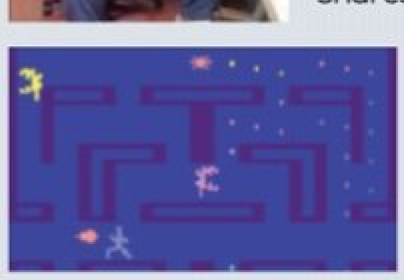


retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



20 ALIENS

Regular reader Bill Matthews tells us why *Aliens* on the Atari 2600 is a damn good *Pac-Man* clone. Even if it shares little in common with the film





retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> Kickstarter continues to excite us, with the recent news that a brand new Broken Sword game is on the way. Charles Cecil reveals his plans for the game and a possible movie, while we also take a look at the incoming launch line-up for Nintendo's Wii U. Not long now…

CONTENTS





» The finished box art cover in all of its glory.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE, REVIVE IT

CHARLES CECIL REVEALS HIS KICKSTARTER-BASED PLANS FOR BROKEN SWORD V

It may have taken more than three years but Charles Cecil's dream of producing a brand new *Broken Sword* game – the fifth in the series – will finally become a reality.

A successful Kickstarter campaign, which raised far in excess of the $400,000 required by Revolution Software, will see the imminent release of *Broken Sword: The Serpent's Curse*. It will once again bring together the title's stars, George Stobbart and Nico Collard in a point-and-click 2D adventure complete with lots of stuff that almost ended on the cutting room floor.

"Kickstarter is crucial for developers like us," begins Charles. "Until a couple of years ago, the publishing model was totally broken for independent developers and we could not afford to operate. The democratisation of funding in this way is hugely important. It feels like the dawning of a new golden age."

The new game will be returning to its 2D roots. "It's much more relevant, both in terms of the look as well as the gameplay style," says Charles. It will also continue with a point-and-click interface supplemented by the slide-and-tap of recent ports. Charles wants the gameplay based on manipulation and the connection of threads of knowledge to draw logical conclusions.

"We are treading a fine line between innovation and ensuring that people get the gameplay that they want," says Charles. "So while the interface is pretty classic, we do plan to innovate in terms of gameplay – an example is that we handle knowledge as an inventory item so people can view the knowledge that they have gathered to date."

At the heart of the game will be the story, however. The new game sees the axing of the Knights Templars, to be replaced by Gnostic heretics. Following the success of *The Da Vinci Code*, Charles felt that the series' subject matter up to now was becoming too clichéd, and so he is now looking to branch out.

"Ultimately, an adventure is about a great story interwoven with compelling puzzles," Charles adds. "Unlike pretty much every other genre, these elements remain intact through technology advances. So while there were elements of the original *Broken Sword* that I felt would benefit from being brought up to date – in particular the use of close-ups to reveal intricate details, and the introduction of a hint system – the core principles remain as valid today as they were 20 years ago."



» The finished Parisian gallery with a very familiar looking blonde hero.



» Kickstarter is becoming a hugely popular way for developers to fund games.

"Ultimately, an adventure is about a great story interwoven with compelling puzzles"

Charles has also been jetting around the world to make the game as authentic as possible. ("My holidays are almost always dedicated to visiting new locations which could feature in a game," he says) and the new game is set to cost more than $1 million to create. The extra cash generated by Kickstarter over and above the initial $400,000 ask will go towards restoring elements of the game that would otherwise have been chopped.

"Our vision for *Broken Sword: The Serpent's Curse* has been to maintain high production values," he says. "We were able to afford to fund half of this but we have had to seek crowd fund support for the rest of the project. We've been pleased by the wonderful response we've had. Once people understood that this was our approach, the reaction was and has remained enormously positive. People have been really generous, both with their comments and their pledges." Charles went on to say that the most difficult part of using Kickstarter was getting the original pledge rewards just right. The team got a lot of feedback from the original rewards and it was able to balance the additional rewards with extra stretch goals.

A humorous video was produced to entice people into parting with their cash. It was produced by Charles, Tony Warriner, Noirin Carmody and scriptwriter, Neil Richards. "I think that it was Neil who actually suggested my 'cut' moment," says Charles who is pleased that many of the original team members are back, albeit on a freelance basis. This, however, offers a more creative environment, he adds.

As well as this, Charles has revealed plans to turn the popular adventure into a film are still very much alive. With *Broken Sword: The Serpent's Curse* set to be launched, Charles says he also wants to see the title's stars on the big screen.

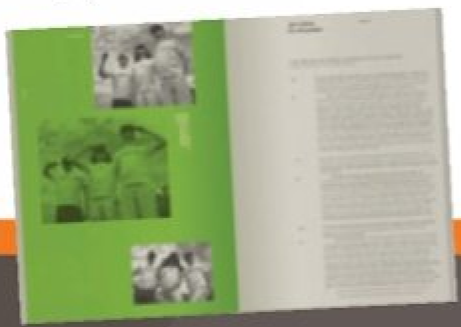
"We have been working with producers who are keen to bring *Broken Sword* to the silver screen," Charles says. Production, however, is proving rather slow given the attention to the new game. "The problem is that our focus is on this game," he adds. "So, while the film is certainly still a live project, it isn't moving forward very fast at the moment." The new game will appear on PC, Mac, Linux, iOS and Android, although Revolution is keen to create console versions.



Other cool crowd-funded projects

Sensible Software 1986 – 1999

A lavish book by fledgling publisher Read-Only Memory, author Darren Wall aims to tell the story of football-mad Sensible Software, combining great coffee table book design with compelling writing. A $38 pledge secures a copy of the book.



Pro Pinball: Revised & Remastered

Cunning Developments' Adrian Barritt founded Silverball Studios with the aim of making pinball games. He got the rights to the *Pro Pinball* games and set about reviving them. The $2 tier got downloads of original PC versions of two pinball games.



Project Giana

Tons of pledge rewards and a chance to secure a copy of the game for just $10 ensured a stampede of cash for a brand new game in the *Giana Sisters* series. The top tier of $10,000 ensures the buyer takes home the only remaining copy of *The Great Giana Sisters* on Atari ST.



GameDock

Produced for iPhone, iPad and iPod devices, the GameDock says it will create a retro videogame console that plays your iOS classics on a HD television. It works by plugging the iPhone into the GameDock and playing with one or two gamepads. $100 got you the GameDock.



From Bedrooms To Billions

Although this was on Indiegogo rather than Kickstarter, the result was the same. Bundles of cash for a retro project that we can't wait to see. This documentary telling the tale of the UK videogame industry from 1979 to 1996 will feature lots of big gaming names.



Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

The Last Time I Ever Write About Shops (I Hope)

I've been writing this column in RG since 1997 and in that time I have had a total of three emails, two of them telling me to shove my Dragon 32 up my bum. However, it would seem that my last two articles about shops that sold video games have really touched a nerve with a lot of you. I have had about 40 emails from you telling me all about your memories. It would be rude of me not to mention a few here (and then I will never talk shop again, promise).

One store I had forgotten about was Tandy. John reminded me and confessed he still feels guilty about taking his faulty joystick in to be replaced, knowing full well that he broke it hammering away in front of *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, a problem I think many of us can empathise with.

A lot of you mentioned your local shops, small businesses that provided a home away from home. Alan talks about a well-hidden emporium run by a generous Italian chap called Ray Agostini. He would happily allow youths to come in and play computer games, being very friendly with them, unless a paying customer arrived, in which case he would ignore the kids. James sent me a lengthy essay where he boasted that back in the day, Grays High Street had two videogame stores. Software Plus was overshadowed by the much hipper 'Software Emporium of Delights', which he admits probably wasn't its real name. You were allowed to go in and watch the un-uniformed staff play on all the games, but kids weren't allowed to play. That rings bells. I used to get almost as much pleasure as a 12-year-old watching others play games as I did playing them myself.

Some of you were very naughty and had all sorts of scams to actually steal games from these places. I obviously don't condone this naughty behaviour, but as it happened almost 30 years ago, I think all of you who did it can be forgiven. Karlos and his mate nicked games like *Operation Wolf* from Tomorrow's World in Hull by simply shoving the cassettes up his sleeve. Simple and effective. Anthony was slightly more ingenious. He would go into Boots in Crawley, hook up a Cassette Drive Interface so he could copy a game as it was being loaded. He would do this on a blank tape from the shop; buy the now not-so-blank tape for 49p and toddle off home. You certainly wouldn't be able to get away with that in *Grumpy Gumphrey Supersleuth*.

Not all of you were little tea leafs though. In the olden days there were some interesting ways to get cheap games, including Swap Shop in Great Yarmouth where, according to Richard, you could rent time on consoles to try out games. Mark talks about Mason's Leisure in Bolton, which does sound pretty cool, and a phenomenon called Fred Fish where you could get games put onto discs for a fraction of the price. Anyone?

Thanks for sharing your memories on this. I personally found all of your emails fascinating. I'll put a selection of them up at www.iainlee.com, so pop along and have a look. And don't worry, next month's column won't be quite so soppy and sentimental, but for now, I love you guys.



I used to get almost as much pleasure as a 12-year-old watching others play games as I did playing them myself



Wii U GOES RETRO

CLASSIC FRANCHISES SPEARHEAD NINTENDO'S WII U LAUNCH

Nintendo has recently revealed the line-up for its incoming Wii U and we couldn't be happier. Several franchises have already been confirmed for its crazily named 'launch window'. By far the biggest is *New Super Mario Bros U*, available from day one.

While we were disappointed with the recent *New Super Mario Bros 2* on 3DS, there seems to be far more effort going into Mario's latest adventure. The innovative Wii-U controller will be used to play the game when your TV is in use, and the new Boost Rush Mode has levels scrolling faster and faster as you pick up more coins.

Nintendo Land is also fast becoming one of our most anticipated titles, as it will include 12 mini-games based on Nintendo's popular franchises. *The Legend Of Zelda, F-Zero, Pokemon, Metroid, Animal Crossing* and *Luigi's Mansion* are just a few of the franchises featured, and every mini-game we've seen makes great use of the Wii U's tech. Nintendo will also be publishing *Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge*, but it's going to have to be pretty special after the disappointing PS3 and Xbox 360 releases.

Nintendo isn't the only publisher airing out its back catalogue. Ubisoft will be pushing *Rayman Legends*, and *Zombie-U* (very loosely based on their first ever game *Zombie*) while Namco is preparing an enhanced version of its recent fighter *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*. Activision's latest *Spyro* game, *Skylanders Giants* will be arriving in time for launch, while you can expect *Epic Mickey 2* from Disney, and *Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed* from Sega.

Backwards compatibility with Wii will be included but you'll no longer be able to play GameCube titles. They'll be on the Virtual Console store instead.

The console itself will be released in Europe on 30 November and will cost £259.99 for the basic model and £359.99 for the premium edition, which includes a Pro Controller.

With hardcore franchises like *Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate* and *Bayonetta 2*, along with casual fare like *Call Of Duty: Black Ops II, Fifa 13* and *Mass Effect 3*, Nintendo's console appears to have something for all. Christmas will be interesting...

We want... THE NINTENDO GAMES WE'D LOVE TO SEE



Kid Icarus
Kid Icarus was a surprise hit on the 3DS, and we can only image what Nintendo will be able to achieve with its innovative new Gamepad.



F-Zero
It's been ages since we've had a decent *F-Zero* game. Give us a new one on the Wii U and make it compatible with the 3DS.



Star Fox
The 3DS update wasn't a huge sales success, but it did remind us have much we love flying around with Fox and co (but not Slippy).



Pokémon Snap
The original N64 version was superb. We could only imagine how this might work on the Wii U GamePad. Make it happen, Nintendo.



Wave Race
This is another franchise that has lain dormant for far too long now. We're sure a HD version would be amazing fun to play.

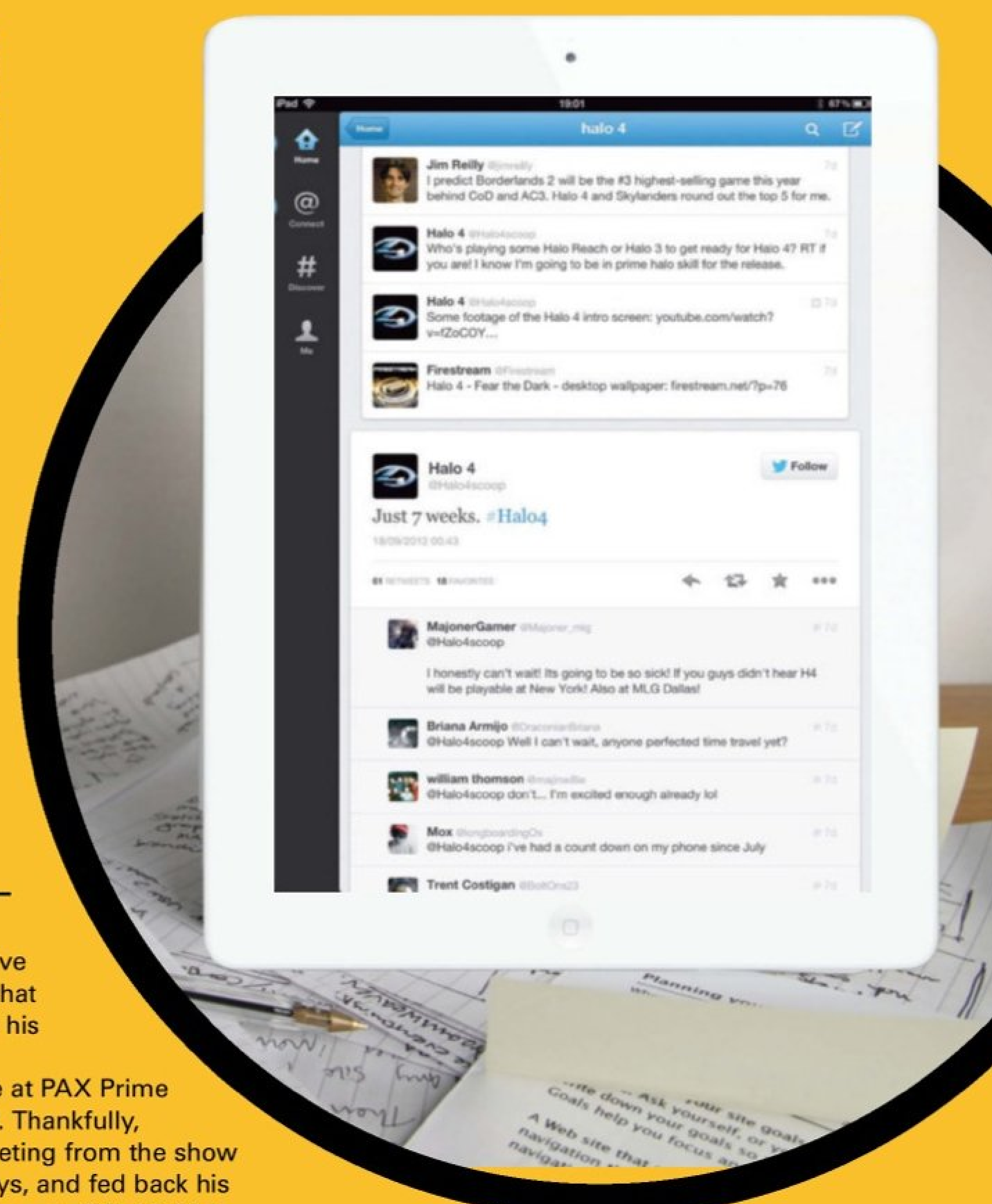
retrocolumns

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Touching distance

To become a videogame pundit lately requires nothing more than a tumblr and/or Twitter account, so why aren't you doing it?

The walls are down, the gates crashed, and all the tyrants toppled. Welcome behind the curtain. You don't need jammy journos to make sense of the games world any more, and maybe you never did.

This shock revelation struck me during the most recent Penny Arcade Expo as I unconsciously compared the flow of info with the most memorable show report from old *Mean Machines*.

Jaz Rignall went to CES 1991 and saw the Super NES in action. Apparently its version of *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* dumped or piddled (wish I could remember the exact details) on the Mega Drive from a great height. The only way we could know this is because, mere days later, Jaz Rignall's words appeared on a printed page. And this was awesome because he had flown in an aeroplane to a far off land, been granted access to somewhere we could not imagine, treated like the king that he was (I'm sure), then allowed to share the same air as the Next Big Thing, and then rushed back to type a report.

How many of us would've killed to be Jaz Rignall at that time? I politely applied for his job instead.

This year I wanted to be at PAX Prime for one game only: *Halo 4*. Thankfully, @TimeGlitch was live-tweeting from the show floor, went for all three days, and fed back his thoughts throughout. Better yet, @Nak3dHalo had gameplay footage with fun commentary. I was as good as there and it didn't cost me anything but my time. From hundreds of opinions of the most hardcore *Halo* fans in the universe I could follow the conversations and glean the general vibe. This, I thought, is how it should be.

I still wished I was in Seattle to have hands-on with *Halo 4*. But the connection with fans was close enough. I fired off questions and the generous guys would answer.

Gaming news in the old days was tough to get hold of, which gave it a value sometimes beyond its genuine worth. It involved making lots of phone calls to an ever-changing parade of PR people, travelling up and down the country, sometimes getting on a plane and (oh, the hardship) flying to Japan or the US and being very polite to people who sported cool accents and even cooler hair.

To be a games journalist you had to work tricky machinery that took 12 hours to render a handful of jelly beans just so readers could enjoy a colourful magazine. You had to take real photos, format and protect with your life a floppy disk of your raw creation, and glue pages together with wax. You had to eat tripe and vinegar and take tea without sugar, then walk home barefoot and sleep on the floor. This to be the first among peers to play *Gunstar Heroes*.

I guess all that's standing between you and becoming the Jaz Rignall of the Twitter age is your name on the door and a clever way with words. But now that you can say anything and present it to the world, what will be your message?

How many of us would have killed to be Jaz Rignall? I politely applied for his job instead



* A MOMENT WITH...

Florent Gorges

Every month, **Retro Gamer** speaks to a member of the games industry. This issue we speak to one of France's top games journalists

Who Is Florent Gorges?

After spending a year in Japan as an exchange student, Florent ended up spending six years in the country and eventually became a translator by the age of 22. A well-known games journalist in France, he is most famous for his excellent biographies on Nintendo and famous Japanese developers such as *Renegade* creator Yoshihisa Kishimoto and Gunpei Yokoi.

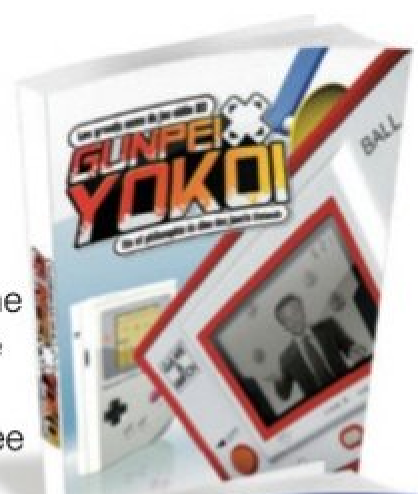
So how did you first get into writing?
When I was a high school student, I went to Japan and stayed there for six years. I became a French/Japanese translator (particularly around the time of the FIFA World Cup 2002). I'm also a big gamer; so I decided to combine my two hobbies: games and Japanese. In 2002, I started to write articles in French magazines about the Japanese gaming industry and Japanese videogame history.

Tell us about Pix'n Love, the indie book publisher you were involved with.
When I lived in Japan, I spent all my free time researching Nintendo's history. More than 3000 pages about Nintendo! But all the [French] publishers told me, "Interesting, but only one 200-page book is enough." So, because there was too much too say, I decided to self-publish my books and created Pix'n Love Publishing with friends. Today, there are more than 40 books, some with world-exclusive content!

How did your book *The History Of Nintendo* come about?
I lived with a Japanese host family when I was 17. And my Japanese grandfather told me one day: "I played Nintendo's playing cards when I was a kid". And he explained that Nintendo had been creating board games, toys and, of course, playing cards for more than 100 years! Outside Japan, we thought it was just an electronic games maker. So I started to do research. And the history of Nintendo, since 1889, is really incredible.

How long did it take you to plan, research and write?
The first volume (about the first century of the company), took me six years of research and writing. Now it takes me around 18 months for each new volume.

How difficult is it for you to track down Japanese developers?
The video game industry is like the jet set. The most difficult thing is to get in. But after, with the good connections, you can meet (almost) everybody! In fact, in 2005, I became a freelance reporter for the famous Japanese monthly magazine *Nintendo Dream*. Every month, I write – in Japanese – a one-page free column about French or European Nintendo news. And thanks to this magazine, I had the opportunity to meet a lot of very interesting people for my books, for example, Mr Uemura, the creator of the Famicom/NES…





Your latest book is about *Double Dragon* creator Yoshihisa Kishimoto. How did the project come about?
I met Mr Kishimoto for an interview about the birth of *Double Dragon* in 2008, in Tokyo. But after a few minutes, I realised that he also created *Thunder Storm* (Laserdisc/Mega CD), *Road Avenger* (Laserdisc/Mega CD), *Renegade*, the *Kunio-kun* series and more than 350 games. When he told me about his "bad boy life", I found it fascinating. His life is a real manga! He is one of the most influential game designers of the world but, strangely, nobody knows his name! So I wanted to do him justice, talking about his full career, in one book. And I think that all retro gamers should read it!

What's your next book project? Are you continuing to write about Nintendo?
I'm now writing the fourth volume of *The History Of Nintendo*, about the Boy family (Game Boy and Virtual Boy). I think I have found some interesting and unknown documents about them. I'm sure that people who think they know everything about them will be surprised!

If you could interview one person from the games industry, alive or dead, who would it be?
Hiroshi Yamauchi, with no doubt. He is one of the Japanese videogame fathers, and he managed Nintendo for more than 50 years! He became president just after WWII and he surely has the answers to all my questions about pre-videogame Nintendo history. But he's an old man and declines all interviews…Sadly.





» [Book] Florent's latest book is about *Double Dragon* creator Yoshihisa Kishimoto, who was behind the *Kunio-kun* series.

» [Book] The first two volumes of Florent's *The History Of Nintendo* series are now available in English via www.pixnlovepublishing.com and www.omakebooks.com.

» [Book] Florent writes a regular monthly column for popular Japanese magazine *Nintendo Dream*.

retrodiary

11 October – 8 November

>> A month of retro events both past and present



13 & 14 October 2012
■ Play Expo is being held at EventCity in Manchester for a two day extravaganza of games.



14 October 1977
■ *Combat* is released on the Atari 2600 as one of the launch titles for the console.



16 October 1991
■ *Mario The Juggler*, the final game in the Game & Watch series, is released.

16 October 1995
■ The little-known Casio Loopy console is released only in Japan.





21 October 1981
■ *Stargate* is released in arcades. Developed by Eugene Jarvis and published by Williams Electronics, *Stargate* was also known as *Defender II*.



20 October 2010
■ The awesome *Super Meat Boy*, developed by Team Meat, is released on Xbox Live Arcade. Simply brilliant.



19 October 2012
■ Activision plans to release *007 Legends*, a James Bond FPS game, across Europe on PS3, Xbox 360 and PC.



17 October 2008
■ Sega's *Golden Axe: Beast Ride* is released in Europe on PS3 and Xbox 360.



24 October 1994
■ Bandai's Playdia console is released, but exclusively in Japan.



25 October 2004
■ Sega released the eagerly awaited sequel to its classic racing game *OutRun* on Xbox.



25 October 2006
■ *Bully* aka *Canis Canem Edit*, the controversial open world game around a school, is released on PlayStation 2.



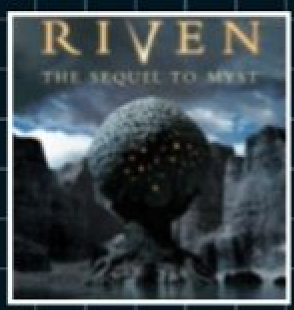
25 October 1996
■ Lara Croft makes her videogame debut in *Tomb Raider* on the Sega Saturn.



2 November 1982
■ Atari's *Millipede*, the sequel to its hit game *Centipede*, arrives in arcades.



29 October 1976
■ Atari's arcade coin-op racing game *Night Driver* is released.



29 October 1997
■ *Riven*, the sequel to the puzzle adventure *Myst*, makes its debut on PC and Mac.



26 October 2012
■ *Lego Lord Of The Rings* is due out on PS3 and Xbox 360.



5 November 1976
■ *F-1*, a racing game and the first electro-mechanical projection arcade game, is developed by Namco and distributed by Atari.



5 November 1982
■ The coin-op *Burger Time* is released into arcades by Data East Corp.



5 November 2010
■ *GoldenEye 007*, complete with gold controller, is released for the Nintendo Wii. Ah yesh, Mhish Moneypenny…



8 November 2012
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

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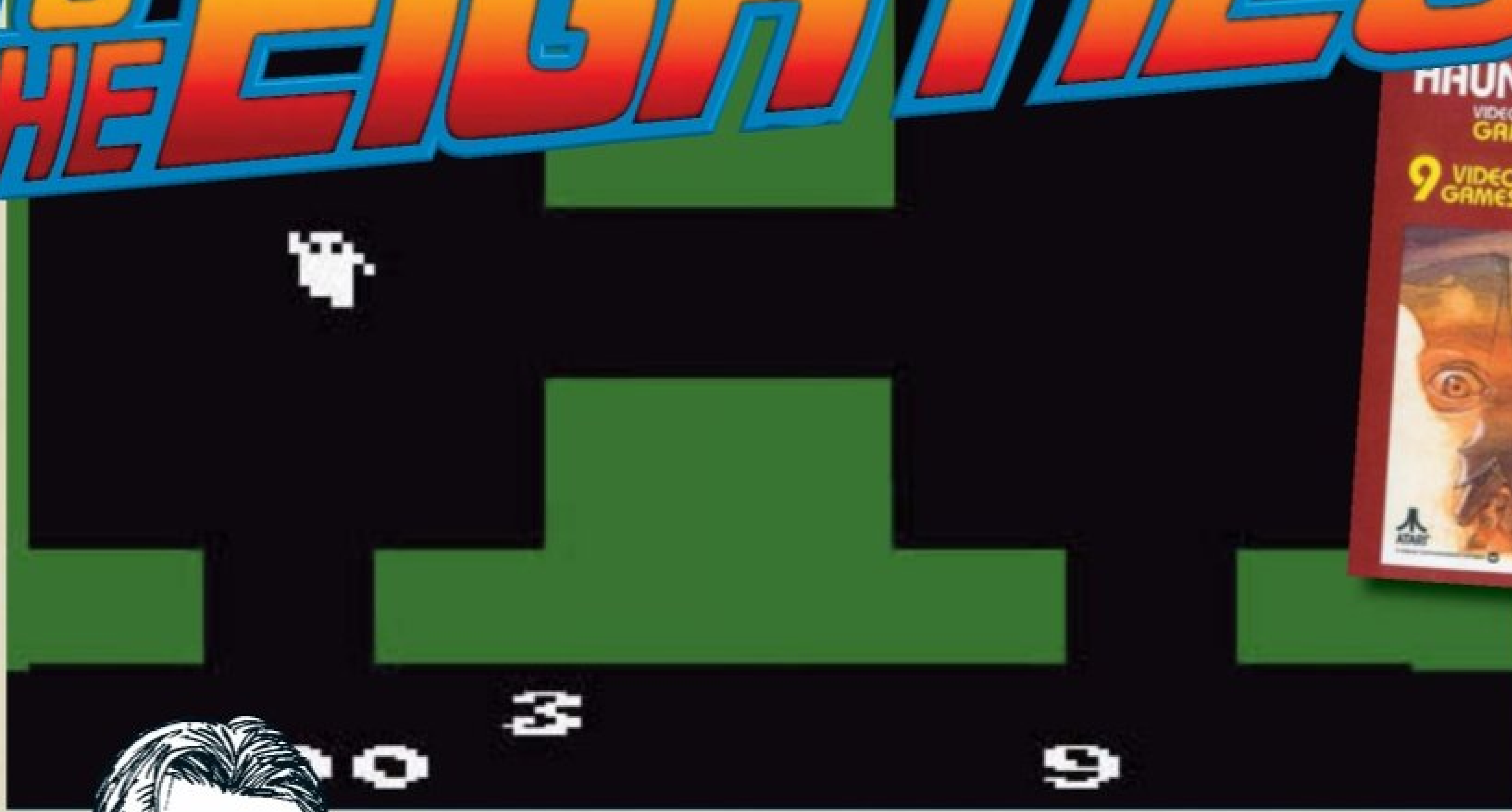


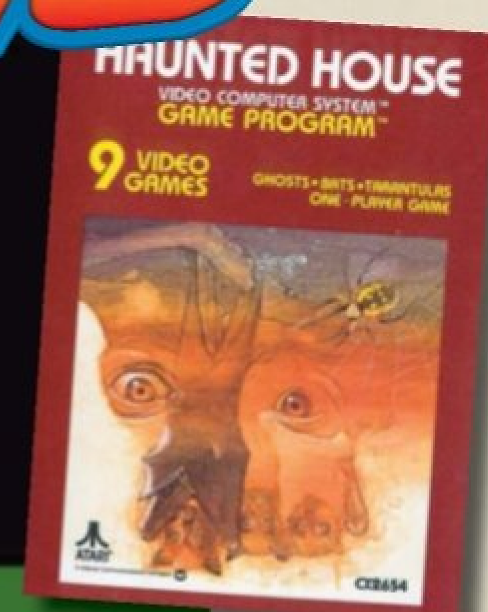
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BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

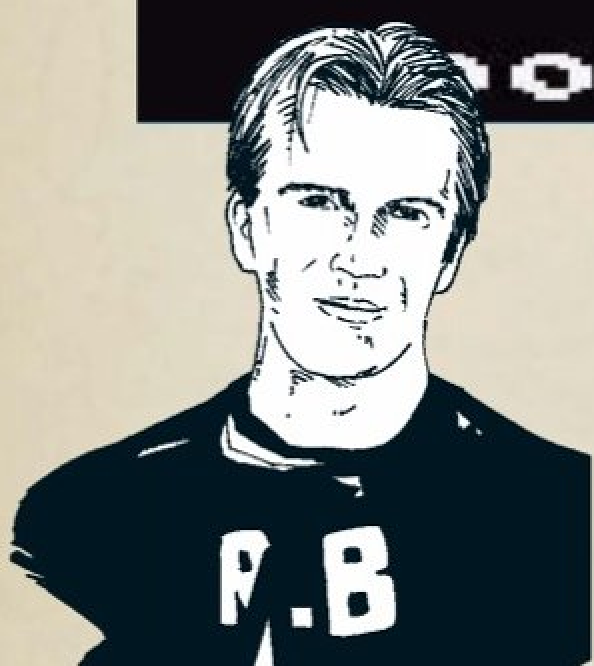




» [Atari 2600] There's no Pyramid Head here to scare the bejesus out of you, just blocky graphics, great sounds effects and your imagination.

» [Arcade] Namco's *Dig Dug* proved that a simple idea is usually the best. Can you dig it?





THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1982

APRIL 82
The Spectrum arrives, Snoopy does tennis, Haunted House scares the 2600, there's a commotion about Loco-Motion, Sinclair User debuts and Dig Dug's no dog. Richard Burton goes for a Pooka…

23 April 1982 saw the official release of Clive Sinclair's ZX Spectrum computer. Love it or loathe it, it would make an massive impact on the British home computing scene and kickstart the golden era of 8-bit gaming and the bedroom coding boom.

£125 would get you a brand new 16K version of the Spectrum, complete with its dead flesh feel rubber keyboard and tinny speaker. £50 more would get you the 48K version. Although, when we say "get"…

Despite being officially released and available via Sinclair Research's mail order department, the overwhelming demand for the machine meant that the earliest that anyone got their Spectrum was June. With an impressive backlog of orders piling up, the Advertising Standards Authority stepped in to give Sinclair Research a reprimand for not adhering to their 28-day delivery promise.

Sinclair estimated that they would sell around 20,000 units a month. Such was the clamour for this new, cheap, colour computer that the actual figure would be closer to 20,000 units a week.

The foibles of Sinclair's marketing, advertising and manufacturing may have been less than perfect in its earliest days but the Spectrum was gathering an impressive army of users. Its quirkiness, the rubbery keyboard, the colour clash and substandard sound all seemed to galvanise fans. It was the quintessential British micro.

The enthusiasm for the Spectrum brought a wave of solo bedroom coders trading their wares and because of this the Spectrum's software base grew exceptionally quickly.

Away from Spectrum news, Sinclair had agreed a new licensing deal with Timex to manufacture and sell their computers in the USA, with Sinclair receiving royalties from the sales. Timex manufactured the ZX81 in Dundee at a rate of knots; approximately 60,000 units a month, though only 20,000 were for the UK market. When Timex started manufacturing in the USA, it would be a Timex clone rather than a Sinclair-branded computer that went on sale.

Sinclair Research also announced profits had risen from £4.6 million to £30 million from the previous year. The future looked extremely rosy for Clive and his company.

A new cartridge out for the Atari 2600 was *Haunted House*. Developed and released by Atari, it is often considered to be the first survival horror videogame. Granted, its graphics weren't going to get you soiling yourself with fear, but the atmosphere built up during gameplay, aided by some carefully positioned sound effects, really did get your imagination running riot.

The premise of the game was to enter a haunted mansion, collect the pieces of a broken urn and get out. Sounds simple, but the pitch black rooms were home to bats, spiders and ghosts and the only way of telling if something was near you was by holding a match for light. These can be blown out by the wind at the most inopportune moments, rendering your next step into the total blackness of the room a potential deadly one. The graphics weren't great, but the sound effects added to the tension with some great creaky door, wind, thunder and eerie footstep sounds. Thought a 2600 game couldn't give you the willies? Think again.

Nintendo unveiled another addition to their Game & Watch handheld collection with the release of the widescreen game *Snoopy Tennis*. Charlie Brown serves tennis balls, and Snoopy must hit the ball back. There is no net but there is a tree that Snoopy must climb to return the erratic serves. Three lives lost and it's over. It was simple, frantic gaming and one of the best loved and best selling Game & Watch titles.



» [Arcade] Everybody's playing a brand new game now. Come on baby, do the *Loco-Motion*.

APRIL 1982 NEWS

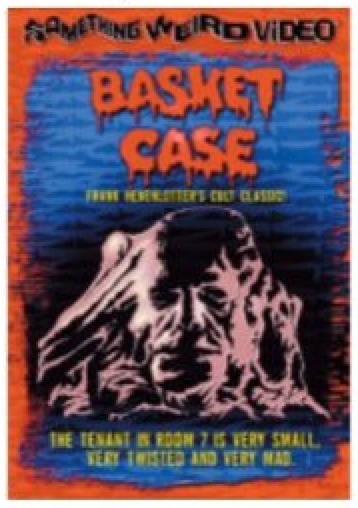
2 April – the Falklands War between Great Britain and Argentina over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands begins. After months of tension between the two nations, Argentine forces invaded sending 3000 troops to take the Falklands. The entire island population was only 1800 with 80 Royal Marines stationed there. They were vastly outnumbered and the Islands were easily taken.

Diplomatic ties were cut, tensions rose and the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher dispatched a large naval fleet to liberate the Falklands. They arrived on the 25 April and after a two hour battle involving Royal Marines on the island of South Georgia re-established a British presence in the Islands.

Argentina's Foreign Minister responded by stating that this action would "have very grave consequences for peace". You were not wrong, Minister.

2 April saw *Conan The Barbarian* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger make its debut in UK cinemas. The slave child grows up, becomes a muscle-bound goliath of a man with a hefty broadsword seeking out the warlord who slaughtered his tribe.

Another movie making an April debut was the cult horror flick, *Basket Case*. Duane turns up at a rough motel with nothing more than a large basket.



He rents a room and feeds the contents of the basket – his psychotic and deformed Siamese twin brother, Belial, who was surgically removed against their will.

Belial is out for revenge against the doctors who separated them and soon he'll be out of his basket and coming for them…

Centuri released a new coin-op, under licence from Konami, which saw the introduction of *Loco-Motion* into arcades. Your aim was to get a train from one end of the track to the other by means of reordering the track layout one square at a time, similar in style to those plastic sliding puzzle games you'd get in goody bags at birthday parties. While they were rubbish, *Loco-Motion* was a little gem of a coin-op that required tactical skill and forward planning rather than a quick trigger finger.

Sega also released *Loco-Motion* under licence from Konami but renamed their version *Guttang Gottong*. Yep, we've no idea either. Three years later, budget software house Mastertronic released their conversion of *Loco-Motion* on the Spectrum and Amstrad.

More well-known, but just as fun to play was the coin-op release of Namco's *Dig Dug*. Your task was to clear each level of underground dwelling monsters, Pookas and Fygars, by crushing them with rocks or



» Clive Sinclair's ZX Spectrum is released. It's a mere two-year wait until *Jet Set Willy* is released.

» [Game & Watch] Charlie Brown (and occasionally Lucy) smack tennis balls at Snoopy who hits them back…



inflating and popping them. You accessed them by digging tunnels, with more points awarded by dispatching them in the deeper colour-coded levels of earth. *Dig Dug* became an instant hit and future all-time classic coin-op.

There were two new publications hitting the newsstands of the UK during April. Timed to perfection was the release of *Sinclair User*, originally published by ECC Publications and later by EMAP. It took a semi-serious approach to computing with plenty of focus on programming, although it also had ample games coverage and the obligatory type-ins. *Sinclair User* was one of the best-loved magazines of the time and ran for 134 issues over 11 years.

Also out was a new weekly read, *Popular Computing Weekly*. The first weekly magazine of its kind in the UK, the magazine was an easy read; a mix of games, news and features with a sprinkling of type-ins and yours for just 30p a pop…

THIS MONTH IN…



SINCLAIR USER

SU's Helpline, the techy programming troubleshooting section, was written by one Andrew Hewson. That's Hewson, as in Hewson Consultants, the small software house that would create and release some cracking future software classics. *Dragontorc, Cybernoid, Exolon, Avalon* and *Nebulus* anyone?





COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

Computer & Video Games magazine looked to the USA for forthcoming technological attractions. Commodore was unveiling its Ultimax computer, while Texas Instruments had additions to its education electronic toy range including the dubiously named Touch & Tell, a junior version of Speak & Spell.





ACTIVISIONS

Activisions was a fan club newsletter for the well known third-party Atari 2600 software developer. If creating some fantastic titles for the VCS wasn't enough, they also had one of the best ever incentive schemes to buy and succeed at their games, with their rewards in the form of marvellous high score sew-on patches.



CHARTS

APRIL 1982

VIC 20



1. Vic-Men (Bug-Byte)
2. Jupiter Lander (Commodore)
3. Another Vic In The Wall (Bug-Byte)
4. Deflex (DK'Tronics)
5. Road Race (Commodore)

ZX81



1. 3D Monster Maze (JK Greye Software)
2. Football Manager (Addictive Games)
3. Centipede (DK'Tronics)
4. The Damsel & The Beast (Bug-Byte)
5. Dictator (Bug-Byte)

ATARI 2600



1. Parachute Pete (Atari)
2. Pac-Man (Atari)
3. Missile Command (Atari)
4. Asteroids (Atari)
5. Kaboom! (Activision)

MUSIC

1. Ebony & Ivory (Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder)
2. My Camera Never Lies (Bucks Fizz)
3. Seven Tears (Goombay Dance Band)
4. Ain't No Pleasing You (Chas & Dave)
5. Papa's Got A Brand New Pigbag (Pigbag)

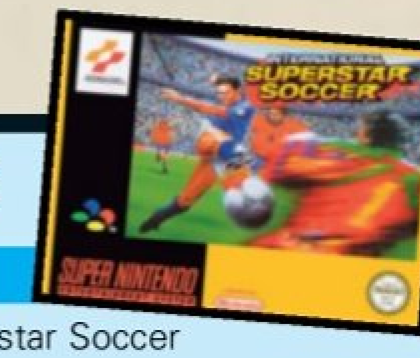


BACK TO THE NINETIES

CHARTS

JULY 1995

SNES

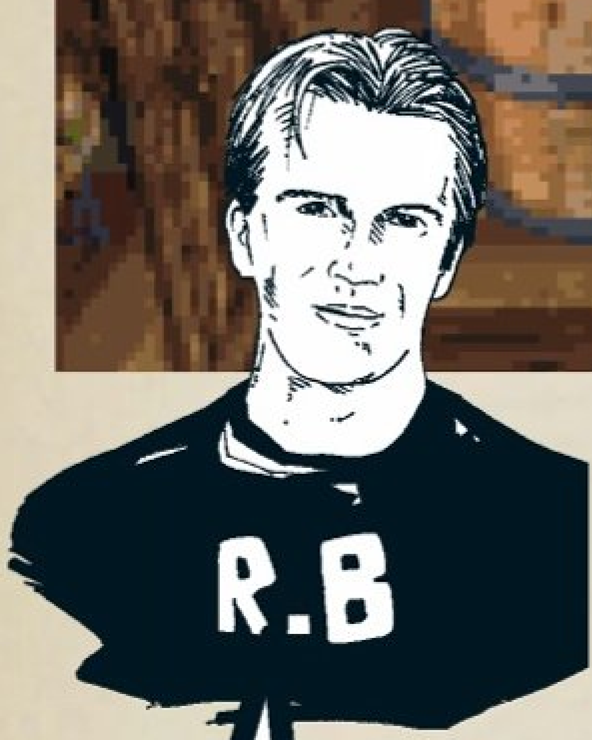


1 International Superstar Soccer (Konami)
2 Unirally (Nintendo)
3 Super Punch Out! (Nintendo)
4 Secret of Mana (Nintendo)
5 Donkey Kong Country (Nintendo)





» [SNES] More terrific monkey-based shenanigans from Rare with Donkey Kong Country 2.



THE LATEST NEWS FROM JULY 1995

JULY 1995 Virtua Cop virtually done, Rare shows Killer Instinct, plus Donkey Kong Country 2, Robots are resurrected for Rise 2, it's all Doom for the SNES, with a belated PC debut for Sonic and Ecco. Richard Burton smells fish…

There was an impressive influx of top games receiving the preview treatment this month with big name releases promised across old and new systems. Newest of all the systems was Sega's Saturn which was officially released in Europe on 7 July. Having got a couple of months headstart on the PlayStation, due out in the US and UK in September, Sega attempted to press home the advantage with news of their impending release of Sega's own conversion of their coin-op game *Virtua Cop.*

Previews looked very promising with reports that it was a perfect arcade conversion. *Virtua Cop* would see you and your buddy cop taking on an evil crime syndicate, and the polygon graphics looked spot on, although rumours of tragically short levels and quick game time completion were rife. Of course, no arcade shooter game could call itself such without a plastic firearm to blow the bad guys away. The Japanese release got an understated black coloured gun while the UK got a garish light blue version. At least it wasn't quite as in-your-face as the bright orange gun America got. Despite these colour aberrations, the gun did what it was designed for splendidly well and *Virtua Cop* would prove to be an excellent release for the new Saturn.



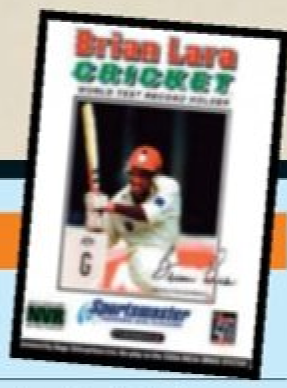
» [Sega Saturn] Jump around your living room blasting henchmen with your blue plastic gun using the sofa as cover.

The Saturn looked to have a strong start ahead of Sony's console and a marvellous opportunity to bury the ongoing Ultra 64/N64 came from Nintendo with news that their console was a full year away from release. Oddly, it was one of Nintendo's old guard, the SNES, where the exciting gaming news was emanating from, with their big name releases soon coming to the market. Rare had its hotly anticipated beat-'em-up arcade conversion *Killer Instinct* due for release, but also had news that a sequel to *Donkey Kong Country* was being developed and due out before the end of the year. Hardly surprising with the original platformer shifting almost nine million copies…

Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy Kong's Quest would see you trying to rescue a kidnapped Donkey Kong while gathering up the bananas sprayed liberally around your surroundings. You got to control Diddy and his newly introduced girlfriend Dixie across eight distinct landscapes covering over 100 levels. A host of hidden bonus levels, improved graphics and an amazing soundtrack made *DKC2* a sure fire and deserved hit and arguably the best game in the *DKC* series. And if *that* wasn't enough monkey love for you, boardgame maker Milton Bradley had also just released a *Donkey Kong Country* Pog game. Yeah, maybe not that exciting…

More surprising than exciting was news that Rare had also translated the original *Donkey Kong Country* onto the Game Boy. It had altered the graphics and levels to take in account the system restrictions and renamed it *Donkey Kong Land*, but the resultant game was as good as anything that had appeared on the handheld. Rare also bravely attempted to convert *Killer Instinct* to the Game Boy but reaction to it was a mixed bag when released.

And to top off a terrific list of forthcoming SNES releases was *Doom* being developed by iD Software and released by Ocean. What wasn't there to like about multiplayer *Doom* and Deathmatch mode? Fragmented jerky animation and chunky pixelated graphics are two things that come to mind…



MEGADRIVE

1 Brian Lara Cricket (Codemasters)
2 Rugby World Cup (Electronic Arts)
3 FIFA Soccer '95 (Electronic Arts)
4 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin Interactive)
5 NBA Action '95 (Sega)



ATARI JAGUAR

1 Iron Soldier (Atari)
2 Hoverstrike (Atari)
3 Theme Park (Ocean)
4 Syndicate (Ocean)
5 Alien Vs Predator (Atari)



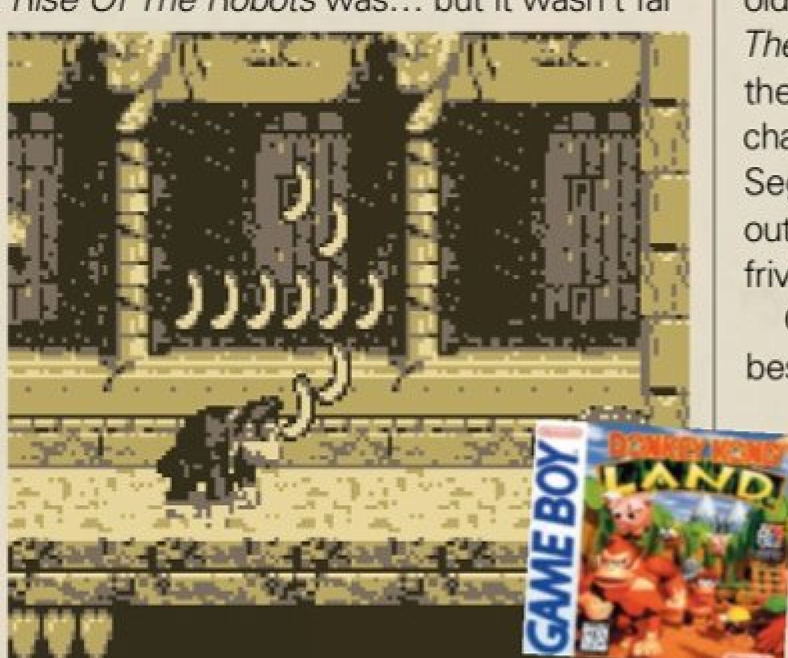
MUSIC

1 Boom Boom Boom (Outhere Brothers)
2 Sly Guy (Diana King)
3 Alright (Supergrass)
4 Unchained Melody/White Cliffs Of Dover (Robson & Jerome)
5 Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, Kill Me (U2)

There was terrifyingly scary news for PlayStation and Saturn owners with the surely unwise decision to release a sequel to *Rise Of The Robots*. Mirage Technologies were again developing, with Acclaim publishing.

With the original *Rise Of The Robots* one of the prettiest yet most godawful pieces of software to (dis)grace a console, expectations for the new game would be intriguingly different to the norm. Gamers and reviewers alike wondered in unison whether it would (or could) be as bad as the original, rather than speculating on whether the development team had learnt from their mistakes the first time around.

Resurrection: Rise 2 was many months away. Would it be the pile of crap everyone feared? It wasn't quite the catastrophe that *Rise Of The Robots* was… but it wasn't far



» [Game Boy] *Donkey Kong Country* is trimmed and squeezed, becoming *Donkey Kong Land* on Game Boy with great results.



» [Sega Saturn] *Rise Of The Robots 2* looked and tasted just like the original. That was not a good thing.

off. Would people buy it? Judging by the universal loathing for the original, the 'once stung, twice shy' approach to games with a reputation whiffier than a sweltering sackful of Stinking Bishop applied. That's a no, then.

PC gamers had interesting news from Sega that it would be releasing the golden oldie pairing of *Ecco The Dolphin* and *Sonic The Hedgehog* on their computers. Despite their age, the lingering appeal of the two characters won over many PC gamers, with Sega's adept conversions with both titles out in time for the family festive gaming frivolities.

One of the Amiga's longest running and best loved magazines was to abruptly end in its present form. The multi-format magazine *The One* began in October 1988 published by EMAP and quickly became a firm favourite with both Atari ST and Amiga gamers. The success of both 16-bit computers encouraged *The One* to split into two separate titles catering for both camps.

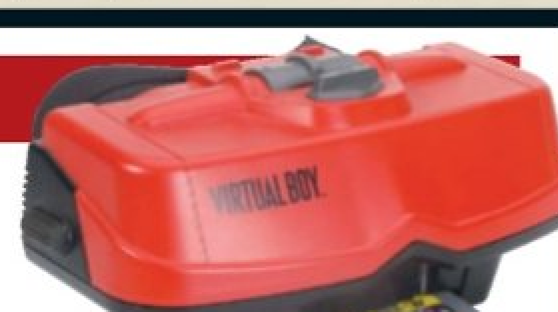
Sadly *The One Amiga* in July 1995 was the last EMAP issue before the delightfully titled Maverick Magazines took over the reins and promptly started running the illustrious tome into ground.

The One staff were also shocked by the swiftness of the sell-off of their magazine, and their announcement in the news section had a hint of bitterness to its tone. The staff described the situation as "a comedy" and stated that their first reaction was to "invite their boss around for dinner and up-end a bowl of trifle on his pompous head". Sponge fingers at the ready…



» *The One Amiga* was cut adrift by its publishers EMAP and right royally ruined by new owners Maverick Magazines.

JULY 1995 NEWS



» The Virtual Boy was a rare flop for Nintendo.

4 July saw the grey man of politics, John Major, win the leadership battle of the Conservative Party and defeat John Redwood, a man nicknamed Spock for his emotionless demeanour. UK politics had never been so dull…

11 July to 22 July saw the Srebrenica massacre take place during the Bosnian War of Independence. Over 8000 people were executed during this 11-day spell. The ethnic cleansing campaign was instigated by President of the Bosnian Serb administration Radovan Karadžic and Ratko Mladic who ordered and carried out the atrocities. Both men were arrested for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Their trials are still ongoing.

17 July saw the passing at the age of 84 of one of the all-time greats in Formula One racing, the Argentine driver Juan Fangio. He won five World Driver's Championships between 1951-57, a feat that remained unsurpassed until Michael Schumacher's eventual tally of seven Driver's Championships. However, Fangio achieved his five titles with four different teams.

21 July saw the world debut of Nintendo's Virtual Boy console. Designed by Gunpei Yokoi, the Virtual Boy promised true 3D graphics in lovely monochrome but didn't mention the headaches and nausea that became a regular complaint amongst users of the system. Although an interesting idea the Virtual Boy was discontinued just five months later.

It sold just 770,000 units in Japan and American and became one of Nintendo's biggest hardware failures. As such, the system is now extremely collectable.

THIS MONTH IN…

SUPERPLAY



What cost your SNES cartridge? *Superplay* investigated with an interesting breakdown of figures. A third party-developed new release costing £50 would see hefty percentages of 29.8% go to the retailer, 33.1% to Nintendo and 14.8% in VAT. After miscellaneous deductions the developer would get a royalty of 4.6% (about £2.26) per £50 cartridge.



MEAN MACHINES SEGA



With Sega's highly regarded development department Sega-AM2 working on the Saturn conversion of *Virtua Fighter 2*, hopes were high of an arcade perfect rendition. While not quite managing that, it was certainly a vast improvement over the glitchy original and would go on to become the best-selling game on the system.



COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



After the lash-up of the movie *Street Fighter*, *C&VG* reviewed the arcade coin-op game based on said disaster. It used digitized likenesses of the actors in the movie, so Kylie got to duff up Van Damme. Whilst the movie putrefied in bargain bins, the coin-op was better than expected.

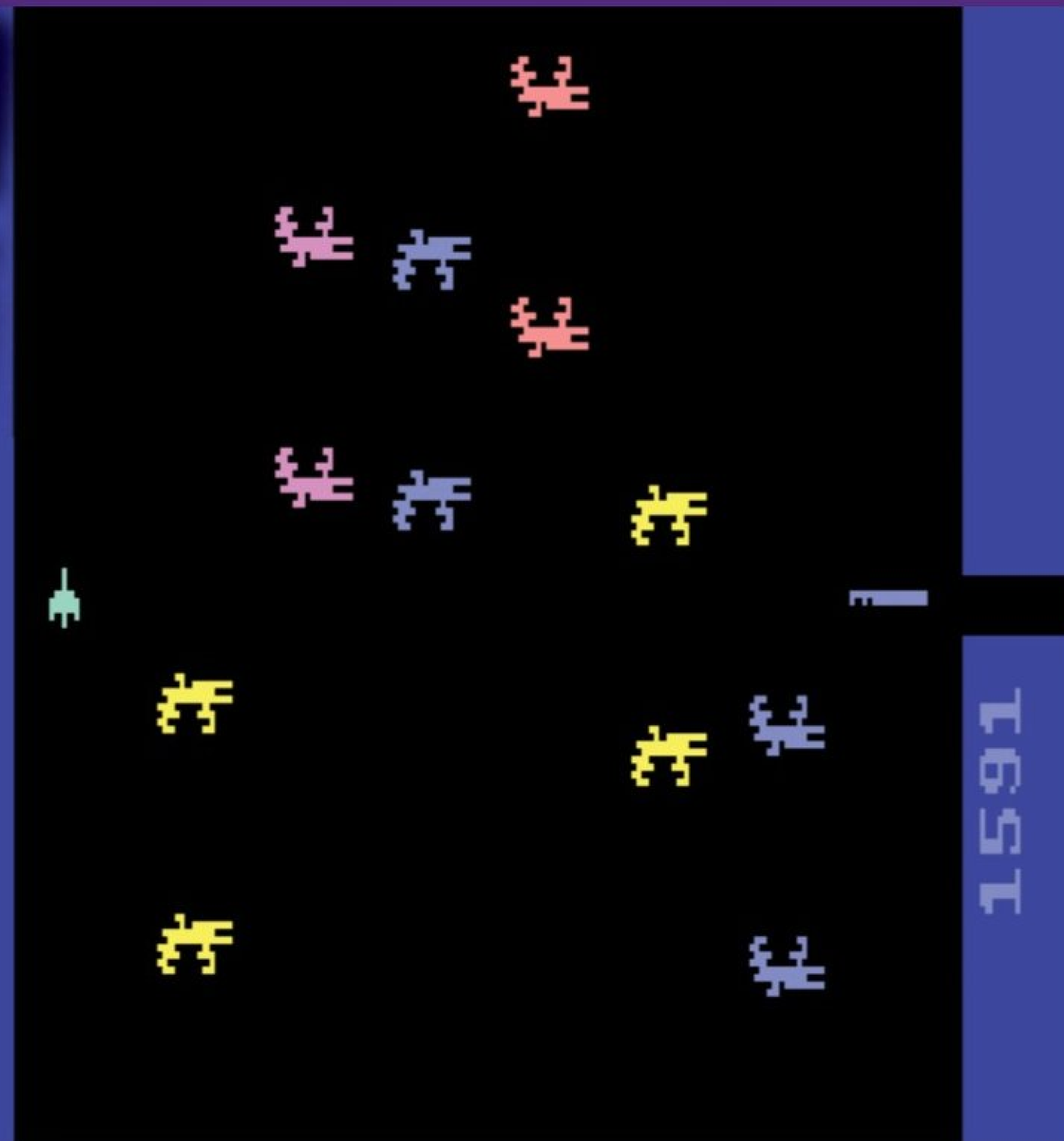


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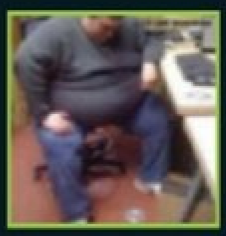
» **NAME:** BILL MATTHEWS
» **JOINED:** MAY 2012
» **LOCATION:** EDINBURGH
» **OCCUPATION:** NOT GIVEN
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** ATARI 2600



Alien

SOMETHING HAS ATTACHED ITSELF TO PAC-MAN. GET HIM TO THE INFIRMARY RIGHT AWAY

#55



» ATARI 2600
» 20TH CENTURY FOX VIDEOGAMES
» 1982

With the recent-ish release of *Prometheus* at the cinema – one of my all-time favourite sci-fi franchises – it encouraged me to dig out and dust off some of my old *Alien* games (*Alien 3* on the Master System is awesome, but that's a review for another day), including this pretty much unheard-of 1982 tie-in of Ridley Scott's classic 1979 movie *Alien*.

People unfamiliar with this game could be forgiven for dismissing it as yet another *Pac-Man* clone, but they would be wrong. For starters, it's not a maze you're running round in – it's the service tunnels of the Nostromo. Second, you're not collecting dots – you're stamping on Alien eggs (presumably wearing some kind of special acid resistant footwear). Third, you're a human (the manual makes no reference to Ripley; you are just labelled as Human). Fourth, while... um...right, I can't do this any more. Okay, it *is* a *Pac-Man* clone, but as *Pac-Man* clones go, it's a damn good one.

Graphically, it's not amazing – you're just a stickman and the great two-mouthed beast itself looks like a walking plumbers wrench. But on the plus side, the gameplay is very fluid and a lot of fun. Other differences from the original *Pac-Man* format include the use of a blowtorch to fight off the Aliens, which is damn pretty cool. It doesn't kill them (you still need to collect the big pill/alien egg for that) but it does scare them off in the opposite direction, giving you time to run away. Another neat little feature is the *Frogger*-alike between round stages. Here, loads of Aliens of all different colours decide to have a party, form a conga line, and you have eight seconds to run across the room without being hit. Randomly fun.

Yes, there have been many *Alien* games released over the years that are (a lot) better than this. Yes, the game is hardly original, and no, it doesn't live up to the suspense and horror that Ridley Scott so masterfully created in his original sci-fi epic. But before you dismiss it, please keep in mind that the A2600 *Pac-Man* conversion was so legendarily crappy that you're probably better off playing this anyway – at least you get to use a blowtorch.



AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING – THE LEGACY OF PSYGNOSIS

Following the sad news that Psygnosis/SCE Studio Liverpool is no more, Retro Gamer and developers with a close link to the studio remember back to when that iconic owl was soaring



Like The Beatles, Psygnosis was a British institution that exploded from Liverpool. The company was formed in 1984 by Ian Hetherington and David Lawson, two former Imagine Software employees: finance director and co-founder respectively. After the fall of Imagine in 1984, the name was bought by its rival Ocean Software, and from the ashes Hetherington and Lawson set up a new publisher and called it Psygnosis.

From the mid-Eighties all the way through the Nineties, Psygnosis was a name renowned for delivering the most interesting, visual, aural and technology-pushing games around, as well as striking game boxes, thanks to acclaimed artist Roger Dean. The owl brought together the height of UK programming talent under its protective wings, with Psygnosis releasing games from the likes of Reflections Interactive, DMA Design and Bizarre Creations.

Though the studio hasn't gone by the name of Psygnosis since 1999, the demise of this notable and longstanding UK studio marks the sad end of a special era of gaming for many. Therefore, this month we remind you of the legacy that Psygnosis/Studio Liverpool leaves behind through some of its most iconic games and the people behind them.



Artist **Roger Dean** on creating the iconic owl logo for Psygnosis

"It was a very obvious thing, that, for me. They kept throwing names at me, and in the end I did the name and the logo. They wanted something that said 'knowledge', 'the future', 'wisdom', 'fun' [laughs], so the owl has to be the obvious choice. It's not the only choice, but it was the obvious choice. And having this very chrome-robotic-owl was a way of having a futuristic owl, I guess. Wrapping that up was the 'Psygnosis' where the 'nosis' part means knowledge [laughs]… It's really just a fake word, but it did carry a sense of being about technology, about knowledge, about wisdom and the future. I have to say this about Jonathan and Ian, they didn't just ask me to do the logo, they made good use of it once they got it… so that was intelligent use of the money they spent."



Blood Money

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: DMA Design

***Blood Money*'s story focuses on an interstellar big game hunt, allowing you to steer a different vehicle (though in one stage you're in some kind of spacesuit) in each of its themed levels. As such, a replay today shows it up for looking like a medley of familiar shooters from *Mr. Heli* to *In The Hunt.* Popular for its ambient music, colourful graphics and slick animation, *Blood Money* is another polished and solid shooter from DMA.**



Brataccas

Publisher: Mindscape Inc
Developer: Psygnosis

***Brataccas* was the first game from Psygnosis. Believed to be built from the vapours of Imagine's *Bandersnatch*, it is the studio's gaming link to Imagine Software. You play a framed man on the run from a corrupt government, and on a mission to reach the manned asteroid Brataccas he hopes will hold the key to his freedom. It looked pretty and had an intricate story, but sadly the experience was let down by the controls.**





John Gibson, Evolution Studios

"Here's a picture of the Psygnosis Advanced Technology Group circa 1991. This team was responsible for Psyggy's Full Motion Video (FMV) technology, which is just a fancy way of saying CD streaming. It has been said that it was this technology that convinced Sony to buy into Psygnosis – rather than any of the other development studios it was taking a look at – prior to the launch of its CD-based PlayStation console. At this time, Psygnosis had just one floor of the South Harrington Building on Sefton Street, Liverpool. After Sony's acquisition of 50% of the company, it expanded at a breakneck pace until it eventually had around eight studios and had moved its headquarters to the plush Napier Court on the Wavertree Technology Park. This building also housed the Psygnosis Liverpool Studio which would eventually become Studio Liverpool when SCEE was born.

"Those days were still the halcyon days of game development; the Imagine mentality still existed. A handful of very expensive cars could always be found in the car park and every man and his dog had a company car. I spent most of this time as software manager, a title bestowed on me by Ian Hetherington. To this day, I've never been able to figure out exactly what was expected of a 'software manager' but my version of the role was to share a large, top-floor office with technical director, Dominic Mallinson and drive around the country in my MR2 visiting the various satellite offices for the purpose of extended pub lunches. I did try to introduce the idea of technology sharing between the studios but given that they were encouraged to compete with each other, I was flogging a dead horse.

"Inevitably, this lifestyle could not last and when Sony realised it'd been pumping millions in and getting very little out, it moved quickly to first of all vote Ian Hetherington off of the board and then to shut down all the satellite studios. In a few short years, Psygnosis had gone full circle. Only now it was no longer Psygnosis, but SCEE."



Infestation

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

A 3D open world vector shooter inspired by the movie *Alien*, *Infestation* told the story of a space marine ordered to wipe out a hostile alien insect race on a distant planet. Boasting an immersive story and visuals, it had atmosphere aplenty. And when you get to the underground section, the action and tension really come rushing to the fore.



The Adventures of Lomax

Publisher: Mindscape Inc
Developer: Psygnosis

This platformer spin-off to *Lemmings* was created by *Flink* creators Erwin Kloibhofer and Henk Nieborg, and stars a knightly lemming named Lomax, who must spin, jump and use different power-giving helmets to free his enchanted Lemming friends from an evil doctor. With stunning *Rayman*-esque visuals and some lovely crisp sounds, it's a delightful platformer.





Shadow Of The Beast

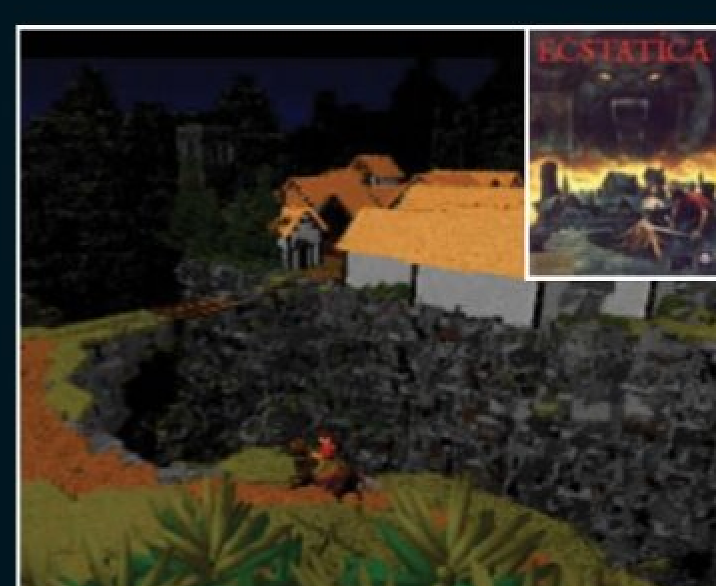
Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Reflections Interactive

Though *Shadow Of The Beast* is often criticised for being a great technical showcase for the Amiga rather than a great game, it still gained legions of fans and spawned one of the most iconic action game trilogies on the computer. It was largely inspired by Martin Edmondson's desire to create an arcade game on home computers, and started life as a technical demo before evolving into something more. *Shadow Of The Beast* would mark an important turning point in Amiga gaming. With its library so often fed with ST ports, it opened many people's eyes to the true power of the Amiga, and its ability to create stunning-looking games loaded with colours and layers of parallax. Psygnosis bosses Ian Hetherington and Jonathan Ellis certainly agreed it was special. Seeing its potential, Psygnosis packaged it in a big box adorned with stunning Roger Dean artwork and a T-shirt, and it retailed for a wallet-wincing £35.

Ecstatica

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Andrew Spencer

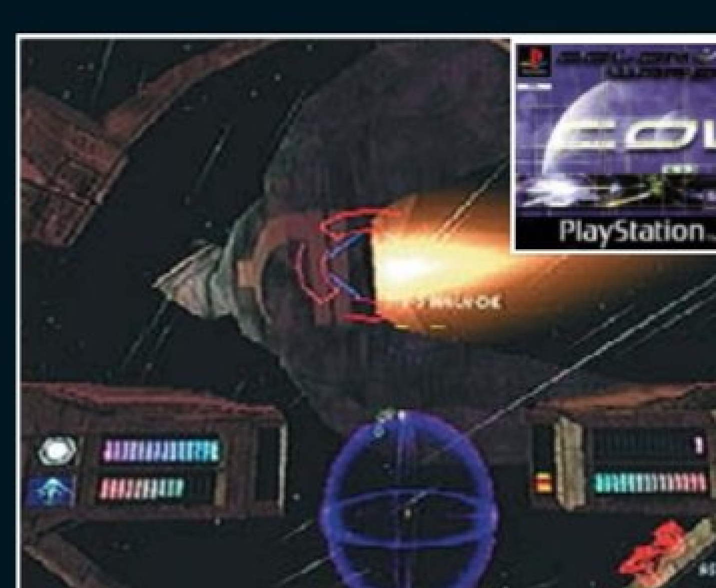
Ecstatica was an action, fantasy and horror adventure game, and one with a nice dollop of crude humour at that. With a fixed camera and distinctive art style that saw its characters and environments constructed using ellipsoids, it looked better than most 3D action games of the time. Playing an adventurer who stumbles into a village besieged by demons and hellish creatures, *Ecstatica* was famous for its visual style, but was popular for its action and dark humour.



Colony Wars

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Colony Wars is Psygnosis doing *Star Wars*. Taking place in a far-flung future, its story focuses on a Rebellion army trying to overthrow a tyrannical Empire in a universe suffering from overpopulation. It looks and sounds like *Star Wars* – heck, even the voiceover guy narrating the story of the game sounds the spit of James Earl Jones (it isn't him, but it's a pretty perfect impression). *Colony Wars* is a stunning and slick space shooter with an engrossing branching story.



Walker



Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: DMA Design

Walker hands you an ED-209-style droid and lets you use it to take the streets to kill everything you come across. With great visuals and punchy sound effects, *Walker* is one of DMA's best presented Amiga offerings. Though the little soldiers you shoot into mush are distant cousins of the Lemmings, what most people remember *Walker* for is the control system, which allowed you to steer the mech and its twin turrets independently with a keyboard and mouse.





Martin Edmondson, founder of Reflections Interactive (now Ubisoft Reflections)

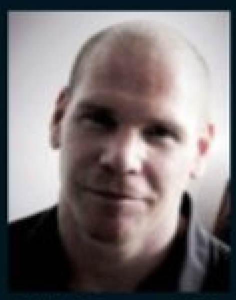
"I was gutted when I heard about the closure to be honest. I remember taking a completed *Ballistix* and an early tech demo of *Shadow Of The Beast* down to show them way back when it was based in the old Robert Smith Metals building on the dock road. A far cry from the huge glass Wavertree Tech Park that came later. I was fascinated by the company before it published for us actually as I was a huge fan of Roger Dean's artwork. But there was a great sense of community amongst some of the developers and I have so many great memories during the time that Psygnosis published our games…

"Moving to Liverpool for a couple of months to finish *Beast 2* and coordinate better with the marketing team. Late, late nights working in an office with no air-conditioning. It's amazing we actually got the game out before expiring to be honest. They got the guy who designed the building to come and try and work in it for a day.

"The excitement of the Sony takeover and PSX hardware development. I remember some of the guys from Psygnosis had to cover their badges at the trade shows as they were swamped like paparazzi swarm round celebrities! That whole period was extremely exciting, actually.

"Showing our first Playstation game (*Destruction Derby*) to Ken Kutaragi. He flew over with a team of engineers and I was demonstrating the game to him. He was very enthusiastic, and smiled a lot, but his only actual comment was that it was a great shame that all of the debris from the cars didn't stay on the track. I remember thinking (but didn't say obviously) 'Surely you realise how hard we are pushing your hardware here without leaving bits of debris all over the track!' He was right, though. If only we could have done it.

"The competition between ourselves and the internal *WipEout* team to push the PS hardware… All in all, some of the best memories I have of the industry. Sad, sad day when I read about its closure."



Neil Thompson, artist, on Nitro

"My favourite game of the period is probably *Nitro*. It was the first one I was responsible for with all the artwork as a member of the Psygnosis art team (I did *Never Mind* prior to that, but it was as an external developer at Lothlorien). At the time there were only four artists: Jeff Bramfitt, Jim Bowers and Garvan Corbett; it was a real honour to join these guys and be a part of what I regarded as the best team of artists in the industry at that time. It was also the game where I first tried to do a 3D intro, the racing car wheel spinning into the screen: it was done on an Amiga 500 with Sculpt 4D. It seems laughable now, but at 320 x 200 pixel resolution, each frame took several hours to render... How things have changed!

"In terms of my feelings over the closure: obviously I'm saddened that some very close friends have lost their jobs, but for me the Psygnosis identity of that studio was lost a long time ago. When I returned to Studio Liverpool (as it then was) to work on the *F1* and *WipEout* HD games, I always felt like the transition from Psygnosis to Sony had been completed and from my perspective I was now a Sony employee.

"The entrepreneurial spirit that governed much of the early work: the beautifully crafted sprites and backgrounds from the 16-bit era and then the drive towards 3D rendering and lavish intros, had now become part and parcel of games globally. The methods for developing games were well understood in terms of technology. My main memories of the early days are that I would go into the studio without a firm idea of what we were going to do on any given day... I just knew it would be creative, inspiring and exciting..."

"It was a real honour to join these guys"



Nitro

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Though top-down racers now feel a thing firmly of gaming past, unless you look to mobile and digital games, at one time they were all the rage. One of the most fondly remembered examples is the excellent *Nitro*. Set in a post-apocalyptic future and starring a small roster of racers that lampooned silver-screen icons (RoboRoger Moore is priceless), it pitted players against the computer and each other across varied racetracks.





Formula 1

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Bizarre Creations

Formula 1 marked Raising Hell Software's first ever Psygnosis title as Bizarre Creations. It was a concept demo titled *Slaughter* that earned the studio the *Formula 1* job, setting it on a path delivering some of the best console racers in history, with the likes of *Metropolis Street Racer*, the *Project Gotham Racing* series and the underrated *Blur*. With the official F1 licence, impressive visuals, realistic controls that demanded real concentration, and a bevy of effects and customisation options, it was a Formula 1 fan's dream.



Menace



Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: DMA Design

The popular Amiga shooter by DMA Design plays in a very similar vein to scrolling shooters such as *R-Type*. It's a solid blaster with chunky arcade-style visuals, and is tough too – it'll take a while to polish off its six levels (especially on the hardest difficulty for more points). Enemies and bosses are well designed, and every level has a distinct theme – like *The Crystal Maze* of Amiga shooters, with a Jungle, Egyptian and erm… Hell stage. *Menace* is notable for being the first game released under Psygnosis' shooter label Psyclapse.



Hired Guns

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: DMA Design

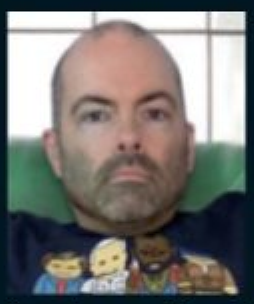
***Hired Guns* is a fabulous action-RPG, with jaw-dropping visuals and a clever four-character control system that could be played between one to four players on a single machine. Set in a world besieged by mutant creatures, you play a quartet of mercenaries tasked with cleaning up. Like the majority of traditional squad-based RPGs, each character class brings its own unique attributes to the table, however here the emphasis is leveraged more towards action than interacting with the game world and its inhabitants.**



Armour-Geddon

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Armour-Geddon **is a deep and challenging 3D action game that lets you construct and control six different vehicles – from helicopters, supersonic jets to hovercrafts – in a series of war skirmishes that take place in a large and immersive 3D landscape. The action really came into its own in multiplayer, with two players able to command vehicles simultaneously using a link cable.**



Tim Wright, musician on Armour-Geddon

"Before I worked for Psygnosis I knew I wanted to work in computer games, primarily creating music and sound effects. I'd tried my hand at programming and artwork, and although I was competent enough at both, my real joy was for the audio side. Working on *Shadow Of The Beast II* as my first commercial project was quite a leap, and quite a risky undertaking for Psygnosis. I guess Ian Hetherington thought I could deliver the goods, so I owe him a lot, really. He took a chance on me in the first instance as a freelancer, and then later took me on as a full-time employee. He wasn't a man of many words, and we didn't speak that often, but I feel he was a big part of the soul of the company.

"When he and Jonathan sold Psygnosis to Sony, I had mixed feelings about it. On the one hand I was really pleased in terms of job security and that we'd be working on new exciting hardware (PSone) ahead of anyone else in Europe. On the other hand, there was always a niggle at the back of my mind that it would gradually re-format the company in its own image. With hindsight, that took a lot longer to happen than I'd first imagined, but it did happen. At one point there were rumours that Ian and Jonathan would buy the company back, but that never came to anything.

"I know some people had a tough time at Psygnosis, but my time there was mostly great fun. I got to work on some groundbreaking and very memorable titles, like *Lemmings*, *Shadow Of The Beast II* and *III*, *WipEout*, *Formula One* and *Colony Wars* to name a few. It's sad that after 28 years that's all come to an end, but I guess all good things do come to an end eventually. One chap in particular deserves a special mention: Garvan Corbett. He was there at the start all those years ago, and was standing when the axe fell. He was the longest serving staff member as far as I know, and I salute him. I hope everyone who lost their job finds new challenges in other companies, or maybe take this opportunity to start their own."

"I hope everyone who lost their job finds new challenges in other companies"

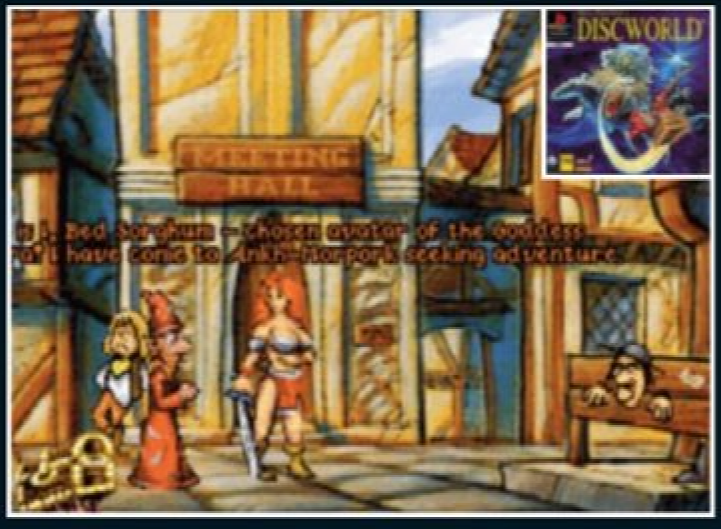




Microcosm

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Ambitious is perhaps the best way to describe *Microcosm*. Cleverly marketed, so that CD32 owners were practically salivating over it, *Microcosm* garnered pretty high scores from most Amiga magazines at the time, who were falling in love with its fantastic looking cut-scenes and on-rails, tunnel-blasting gameplay. *Amiga Power* was less impressed; but for us the truth is that it falls somewhere in between, being little more than an average blaster along the lines of *Sewer Shark*. As with many Psygnosis games of the time, the PC version was lavishly boxed, and included a CD soundtrack and T-shirt. Interestingly, a CDi version was in development, but never saw the light of day.



Discworld

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Teeny Weeny Games

Arriving at a time when the popularity of the point-and-click adventure was starting to wane with age, *Discworld* defied the odds and became one of the best adventure games of its day. Appearing on PC, Mac, PlayStation and Saturn, it marked the first time the world of Ankh-Morpork had been fully brought to life on computers and games consoles, coming many years after the release of *The Colour Of Magic*; a text-adventure based on the first book in the series. Developed with love, and by a team clearly impassioned by the source material, it's as perfect a videogame adaptation as you could hope for, with stunning visuals, great humour and voice acting throughout.



The Killing Gameshow

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Bizarre Creations

Playing like the preposterous child of *Turrican* and *Rainbow Islands*, *The Killing Gameshow* (released as *Fatal Rewind*, and published by EA, on the Mega Drive), is a run-and-gun platformer that stars a man stripped of his skin, put into a cybernetic suit and thrust into a deadly gameshow. It isn't all bad news though, as the suit enables him to wield different weapons – from scatter to laser guns – and scale walls with ease, both of which come in very handy as the levels are teeming with enemies and gradually fill with a deadly liquid. A tense but enjoyable platformer.

LEMMINGS



Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: DMA Design

Though Psygnosis didn't develop *Lemmings*, it is one of those titles most strongly associated with the Psygnosis name. Designed by DMA Design, *Lemmings* became one of the biggest videogame success stories of the Nineties, and graced pretty much every machine under the sun – there was even a Data East arcade game in production at one stage. Starting life as a simple walk-animation knocked up in a lunch break for the game *Walker*, when Russell Kay (author of the PC version) commented that there was 'a game in that' he worked on putting a demo together that was first shown to Psygnosis at the 1989 PCW show. DMA then started work on the game, with Psygnosis testing the levels and providing it with assets from already existing games – including *Shadow Of The Beast* and *Awesome* – to use in the game's Deluxe Paint-designed levels, while Psygnosis musician Tim Wright co-worked on the music. *Lemmings* was a storming success, and is estimated to have sold over 15 million copies.



Mike Dailly, DMA Design, game designer, worked on Lemmings

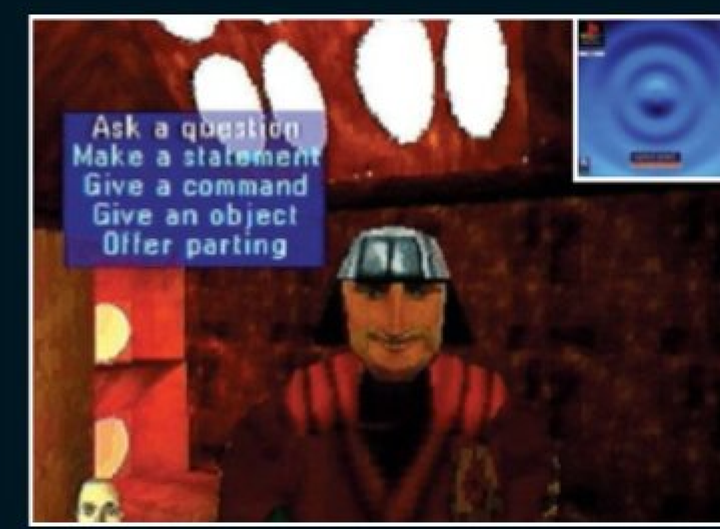
"In its day, Psygnosis was *the* company to work for. It had style, great-looking games, and *big* shiny boxes with a "free" T-shirt in them. I have so many fond memories of the people there, and my time working with them, I loved it. I remember having to ship my whole development kit down to Psygnosis HQ to refresh the art of *Shadow Of The Beast* for the PC Engine CDROM2. I was put into the same office as Ian Hetherington and John Whyte for a week while I worked with Martyn Chudley as he took time out from doing *Wiz 'n' Liz* on the Mega Drive so he could do the art for me.

"We had a terrible train trip down from Dundee, and the only hotel room left in Liverpool was the penthouse in one of the most expensive hotels in the city centre. It was awesome. It was either John or Ian that took me up to the room, and then firmly told me to "behave". I was moved to a nice cheap hotel the next day, but for a 22-year-old, it was still fun! Psygnosis was full of great folk, and I'll always remember walking around my first games show after getting a free Psygnosis T-shirt with the word "Developer" on the sleeve. I had arrived. Great times.

"I guess it's been gone for some time really, but this seems like finally closing the book on Psygnosis and all the great games it produced. I miss its style, you could always tell a Psygnosis game. They oozed class. Psygnosis helped give me my big break in games, and I'll never forget that. Happy days..."







Sentient

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

This ambitious and involving first-person adventure takes place on a giant space station which is heading towards the sun after its captain gets murdered by a mysterious assailant and a power struggle ensues. With over 200 locations to explore, 60 different characters to interact with and some clever AI, which randomly generates side-stories, it was the *Mass Effect* of its day.



Flink

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Flink is possibly the most detail-rich platformer to emerge from the 16-bit generation. It follows the usual tropes: climbing up vines, jumping on the heads of enemies, etc, but its hook is that it fuses a cool spell-casting mechanic to the action. By reading scrolls and picking up the appropriate ingredients, you can cast spells to influence the game world.



G-Police

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Wheelhaus

Set in a bleak *Blade Runner*-style future world, *G-Police* sees you play a pilot working for a shady police force hitting the streets in a 'jet helicopter' to take on criminals and the bought armies of big corporations. Praised for its visuals, though criticised for its shallow draw distances, *G-Police* was created by the Stroud studio of Psygnosis, who also made *Overboard*!



Rollcage

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: ATD

Though it's basically *WipEout* on wheels, *Rollcage* didn't enjoy the same success as Psygnosis's flagship racing series. Stunning 3D visuals, crisp sound, incredibly fast gameplay, plenty of customisation options, and tunnelled tracks you could drive up and around the inner walls of made this a fun, slick and polished racer deserving of far more acclaim than it got.



Barbarian



Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Not to be confused with Palace Software's iconic fighter, *Barbarian* was a stunning side-scrolling hack-and-slash game with an unusual control system: your character's movements and attacks were actuated through a tiled *Lemmings*-style interface and mouse controls. A thinking man's *Rastan*, it involved puzzles, and slicing up goblins, werewolves and Orks.









Agony

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Art & Magic

This stunning shooter is notable for two things, a) it actually stars the Psygnosis owl, and b) its visuals contrast brilliantly with those of traditional shooters; chaotic space battles and claustrophobic hellish grottos give way to tranquil woodland and bosses comprising large insects, evil trees and angry waves. Wonderfully presented throughout, *Agony* is the *Ecco The Dolphin* of side-scrolling shooters.



Franck Sauer, Art & Magic, artist on Agony

"Psygnosis will always be a very special company to me. A company with a desire for quality and artistic integrity, unlike many publishers nowadays. When we started pitching *Agony* for the Amiga in 1991, we were showing our latest game *Unreal* at the ECTS in London. Steve Riding, producer at Psygnosis came to our booth (actually Ubisoft booth) and we showed him a prototype of *Agony.* He was impressed and invited Yves Grolet and me to a dinner the same evening: he wanted the game badly. You have to realize all the stars of development at the time were signed by Psygnosis, such as Reflections and DMA. Being part of that family would have been incredible for us, we thought.

"Even with the language barrier (we barely spoke English at the time) we understood each other, and during the dinner we realized we both shared the same vision of where the game should be heading to. Of course Steve had prepared well for that meeting and greeted us with bags full of Psygnosis goodies. Ah, those were the days. When we left, we had large smiles on our faces. The project was signed a few days later.

"When I look back, it strikes me how free we were to design a game that was a piece of personal work. Steve's only interaction with us was to help us increase the quality even further to reach Psygnosis standards. He helped us to contract some of the best musicians of the time, and Tim Wright's incredible intro piano piece is a tribute to that. This is in complete opposition with today's publishers and their corporate culture, trying to impose their always-changing 'vision' or strategic marketing bullshit. The result is that Agony is often regarded as a piece of art, and regularly cited among the best Amiga titles, and I'm really proud of that."

"Agony is often regarded as a piece of art, and I'm proud of that"

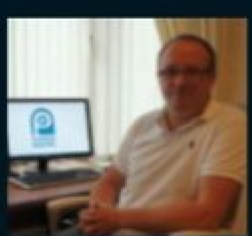


WIPEOUT

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

Psygnosis's contribution to the early success PlayStation saw in Europe cannot be underplayed. Its first duo of racing titles for the console, *WipEout* and *Destruction Derby,* not only became strongly associated to the PlayStation brand, but set an extremely high standard for other studios to follow. While there is no doubt *Ridge Racer* was a great conversion of a great racing game, it was born in amusement arcades. *WipEout,* however, played to the full strengths of Sony's new machine, and was typical Psygnosis in every way. It was sleek, fast, had a pumping soundtrack and brilliantly melded stunning state-of-the-art visuals with a dark world. Following *WipEout*'s success, Sony was convinced of the studio's talents, and keen to keep them under lock and key made an offer to buy into the studio. Following the deal, the studio kept the Psygnosis name until 1999, when it was renamed SCE Studio Liverpool.





Nick Burcombe, Psygnosis, game designer on WipEout

The very first five-level playable demo of *Lemmings* was an office favourite. So much so that Ian Hetherington had to ban us playing as it was sucking up so much time.

When the full game finally came in for testing, which was still my primary role at the time, *Lemmings* was my favourite game by far... for a while... After repeated testing on Amiga, ST, I was still a fan. But when it went to PC – I kinda went off it. I had to test it on a 66mhz PC with a four-colour VGA adapter. It also ran at about five frames per second, making it a torturous task. The black/green/yellow/red colour scheme was headache inducing, but still marginally better than the black/white/cyan/magenta. This was the most soul-sappingly tedious QA job I'd ever done.





Jeff Bramfitt, artist on Microcosm

"Before Sony took over, and for a few years after, it was a fun place to work, because everybody was excited about the new possibilities unfolding before us. In effect it was a totally new medium, with vast potential and we were suddenly at the leading edge. But the bottom line for a lot of us was, we were being paid to create monsters and spaceships and couldn't believe our luck! Graphically, we could do pretty much what we wanted, within the bounds of the technology and acted as our own art directors. The rigid studio structure that exists now hadn't evolved then and people moved around a lot, animation one day, characters the next, maybe backgrounds the next and so on. You did everything.

Most of us had little or no experience, certainly on the art side, but in those days nobody did, so what mattered was attitude and creative ability. In the late Eighties and early Nineties the company grew very rapidly and as art manager I was responsible for recruiting new artists. Experienced games CG artists were virtually non-existent, so we would take people with very strong illustrative skills, an unhealthy interest in fantasy, sci-fi, films, etc, and train them in-house from scratch. Unheard of today, but it produced and channelled some outstanding talent, many of whom used us a jumping off point into the film industry, some subsequently winning Oscars!

"Things did go downhill after Sony took over, constantly changing management who became more detached from production and more interested in career politics stifled creativity and confidence. The Studio was not such a fun place to work anymore, suddenly surrounded by middle managers with little understanding and patience for creative processes and threatened by sudden and frequent redundancies throughout the Noughties, it was frustrating for very talented programmers, designers and artists who just wanted to get on with it. In the early days you could work on half a dozen games a year, they were churned out with varying quality, but it produced some good stuff, some would succeed and you learned from each. Under Sony (and other majors) games have become singular leviathans designed by committee, which take too long to make and can subsequently sink a company or studio before they're even finished and I think to survive, the industry needs to combine both approaches.

"If I was to briefly sum up Psygnosis it would be 'kids in a sweetshop'. Like-minded, very creative young people suddenly finding themselves an integral part of a new era, with copious quantities of beer, fags and pizza."

Wiz 'n' Liz – The Frantic Wabbit Wescue



Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Raising Hell Software/
Bizarre Creations

Developed by Raising Hell Software (the former name of Bizarre Creations), *Wiz 'n' Liz* was an unusual spin on the cutesy platformer. The object of the game was simple: collect rabbits hopping around the many levels and pick up the floating letters they drop upon capture. Incredibly slick and super fast, it's a pure and cathartic collect-'em-up as there are no enemies, just a stringent time limit and lightning speed of the thing to worry about. The *Flicky*-style retrieval mission did mix things up with the occasional boss battle, and there's even a *Snake* mini-game too.



Retro Gamer would like to give special thanks to the freelancers and developers that contributed to this article

Awesome

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Reflections Interactive

The thing that impressed many about *Awesome* was its variety. Things were kept interesting for the player, with stages comprising different gameplay styles, including a top-down shooter, an into-the-screen blaster, and even a decent *Alien Breed* section. It's a solid and nicely presented shooter, and the music's superb too.



Overboard!

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: In-house

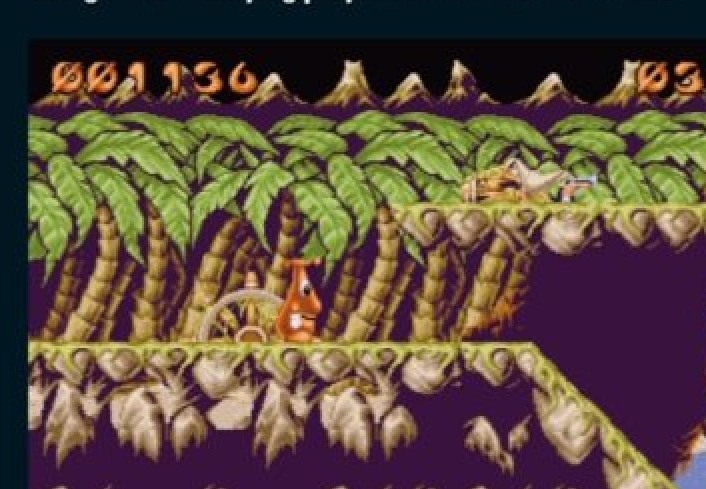
Everything about *Overboard!* is simple, arcade fun. Steering a little cartoon pirate ship, you make your way around each of the five water-based obstacle courses safely while pillaging treasure and putting cannonballs into enemy ships. It's like Sid Meier's *Pirates!* meets *Total Wipeout*. It also features a really playable deathmatch mode spread across ten different arenas.



Pugssy

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Traveller's Tales

We've played this quirky platformer for a number of years now, and we still can't work out what Puggsy actually is. What we do know however is that *Pugssy* the game is a highly interesting puzzle/platformer that combines gorgeous visuals with interesting level design and satisfying play mechanics. Check it out.





1951 Alan Turing next to the Manchester Mark 1, one of the first programs capable of running a stored program.



1959 Ivan Sutherland demonstrating his Sketchpad setup on the TX-2 computer. Featuring an advanced graphical interface and drawing techniques, his research would influence generations.



1970 A typical text-data terminal that came in to wider use during the late Sixties. Many of the text-based games written in BASIC or FOCAL would have been programmed and played on terminals like this.



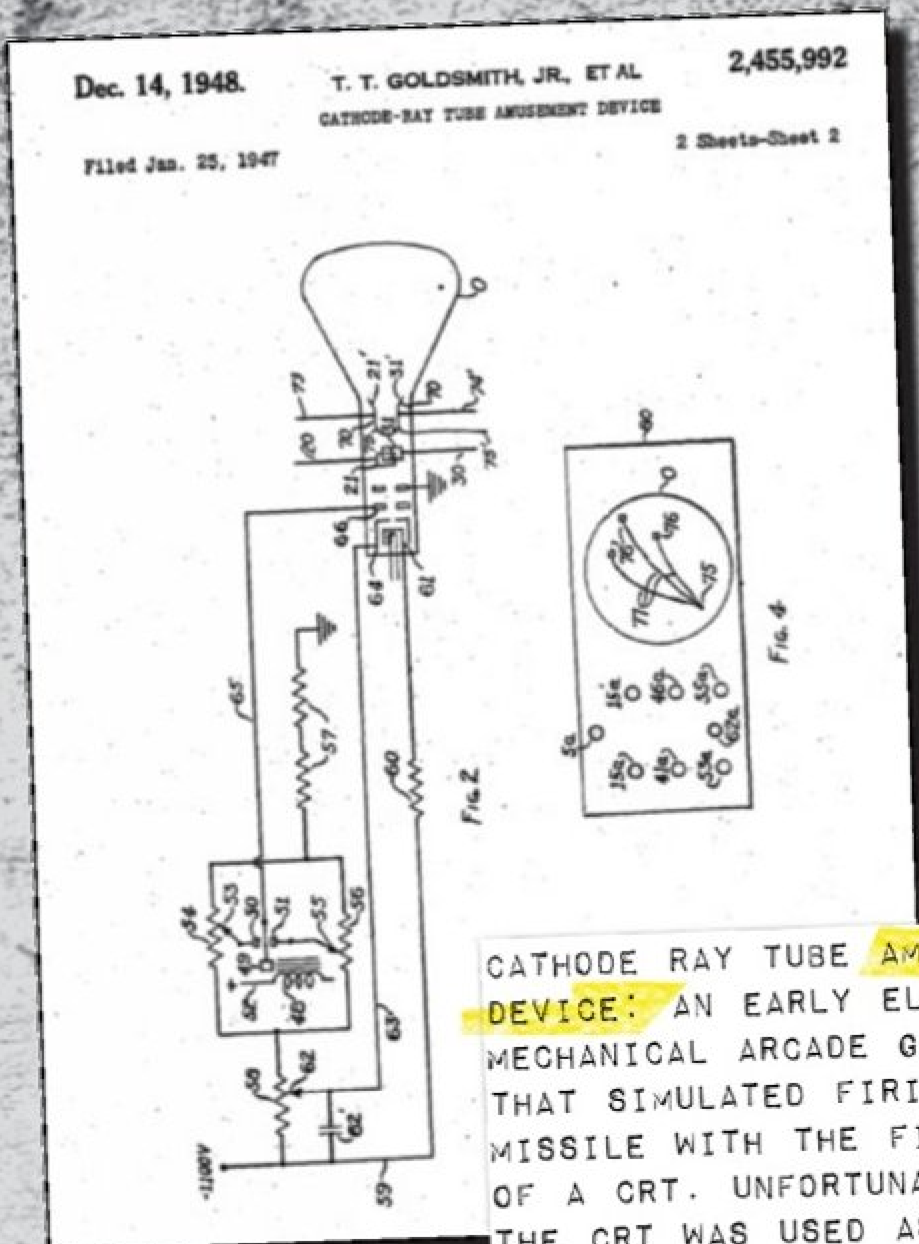
1958 Tennis For Two is on the far left, involving the simulation of a tennis ball on a tiny vector-generated screen.

BEFORE VIDEOGAMES

UP THERE WITH THE QUESTION OF "WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE BIG BANG?" IS "WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE VIDEOGAMES?" MARTY GOLDBERG TAKES YOU ON A JOURNEY TO THAT PRIMORDIAL LANDSCAPE

The term "videogame" was, according to *Pong* creator Al Alcorn, first suggested by a reporter covering Atari in early 1973. Trying to come up with a unique description for the technology that at that point was also being referred to as TV Game, TV Tennis, Space Age Game, Video Action Game, Electronic Game, Television Skill Game and Video Skill Game, the reporter latched on to the theme and coined "videogame". That theme, of course, was the new format of electronic entertainment developed independently in the late Sixties and early Seventies by Ralph Baer and Nolan Bushnell with Ted Dabney. And not only the products themselves, but the technology behind them, which revolved around tapping into a television set and displaying electronically-generated objects via its video signal to play a game.

While these were the first videogames, they certainly weren't the first electronic games, nor were they the first to utilise a cathode ray tube (CRT). So the question arises, what was there for high-tech electronic-driven entertainment before



CATHODE RAY TUBE AMUSEMENT DEVICE: AN EARLY ELECTRO-MECHANICAL ARCADE GAME THAT SIMULATED FIRING AT A MISSILE WITH THE FIRST USE OF A CRT. UNFORTUNATELY, THE CRT WAS USED AS A PROP WHOSE ONLY VALUE WAS A (THEN) FUTURISTIC-LOOKING DOT ON THE SCREEN. ALL GAMEPLAY WAS FULLY ELECTRO-MECHANICAL AND A FLASHLIGHT AND BED SHEET WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST AS EFFECTIVE.

THE NIMROD COMPUTER IS CREATED BY BRITISH ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURER FERRANTI AND PRESENTED AT THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN. THE FIRST DIGITAL COMPUTER BUILT SPECIFICALLY TO PLAY A GAME. THE DISPLAY IS A 7 X 4 MATRIX OF LIGHT BULBS MEANT TO REPRESENT THE BOARD POSITIONS OF THIS MATHEMATICAL GAME OF STRATEGY.



THE WORLD'S FIRST CHESS PROGRAM IS DEVELOPED ON MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY'S FERRANTI MARK 1 BY DIETRICH PRINZ. ONLY ABLE TO PLAY A PARTIAL GAME OF CHESS BY CALCULATING "MATE-IN-TWO" PROBLEMS. IT'S BASED ON FAMOUS BRITISH MATHEMATICIAN AND COMPUTER SCIENCE LEGEND ALAN TURING'S THEORETICAL CHESS PROGRAM WRITTEN SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER ON PAPER.



1945 1946 **1947** 1948 1950 **1951** 1952

videogames? The answer lies across a curious array of fields such as amusement, electronics, university research and defence research. Fields which found themselves continually crossing paths during the Forties through to the Sixties for the education and enjoyment of others.

CRT AMUSEMENT DEVICE

Amusement devices – entertainment machines for arcades that charged money for every play – were for the longest time a mixture of pure mechanical and electro-mechanical (EM) hybrids. In 1947, Thomas Goldsmith Jr. and Estle Ray Mann came up with the idea of adding a CRT from a radar system for use in an EM game, giving the first glimpse of what would actually occur almost 20 years later.

Unfortunately the CRT was used as nothing more than a prop; the entire game was still electro-mechanical with the player directly moving the CRT's beam, not unlike an etch-a-sketch. The targets were pieces of paper taped to the screen, and the main object of the game – directing the dot produced by the beam to the targets – was hindered mechanically to provide the needed skill challenge. Altogether, a usage of the CRT that could have easily been replaced with a flashlight and bed sheet, but still provided the first known use of appropriating a CRT for a game.

COMPUTER INTELLIGENCE

In the early days of computer research at universities in the late Forties and early Fifties, the primary focus was on getting computers to solve logic problems. Often involving the use of one-off custom-built computers, the logic problems they were solving were usually in the form of traditional games that encourage logic and cognitive thinking like Chess, Tic-tac-toe, and Nim.

In these early days of electronic-based gaming, pretty much any available output format was used for display during the game. The solution of how to directly display some form of game display on a CRT was a complete mystery. Computer graphics, as a field, had yet to be invented and in fact using a CRT for simple lit dots representing memory space was considered a luxury.

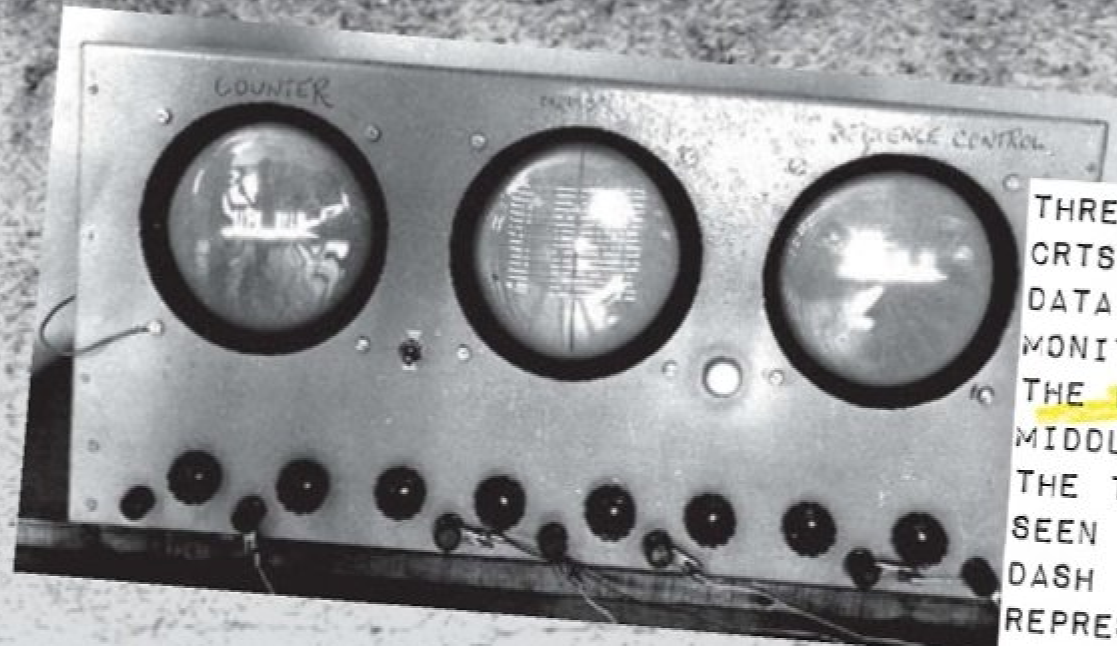
In 1951, the Nimrod computer, designed by Ferranti in the UK, used a 5 x 4 matrix of light bulbs to display a game of Nim. The first digital computer specifically created to play a game, the blinking rows of lights on the computer and operator console conformed to what would become a stereotypical view for many generations regarding human-computer interaction.

Dietrich Prinz, a colleague of Alan Turing (probably the most influential person in Computer Science) wrote a program in 1951 to play a partial game of chess on Manchester University's Ferranti Mark I. The first commercially available computer, it was based on the earlier Manchester Mark 1, one of the first computers able to run a stored program. The chess program was based on an earlier 'written only' chess-playing program by Alan Turing, done without access to an actual computer. Output for the chess program, and for any program on the Mark 1 for that matter, was outputted on a teletype or looked at by analysing the small CRT that doubled as the system's memory. These memory locations displayed as a series of dots and dashes on the CRT, letting the operator "peer inside" the computer's memory in real time. This was made possible because the CRT was the actual main memory for the ►

> **"Computer graphics as a field had yet to be invented, and using a CRT for simple dots was a luxury"**



ALAN TURING
Mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst, and most importantly computer scientist. A legend in the field of computers, his contributions to logic and artificial intelligence are longstanding. The software algorithms he wrote for playing chess and other games of logic – without access to the actual machinery they would eventually run on – directly led to the advancement of not just electronic gaming but even to the highly complex AI of the games today. As an open homosexual, he was sadly required to chose between chemical castration and prison (homosexuality was illegal in the UK at the time), opting for chemical castration. Alan later died of cyanide poisoning in 1954, never seeing the full fruit his ideas would bear.



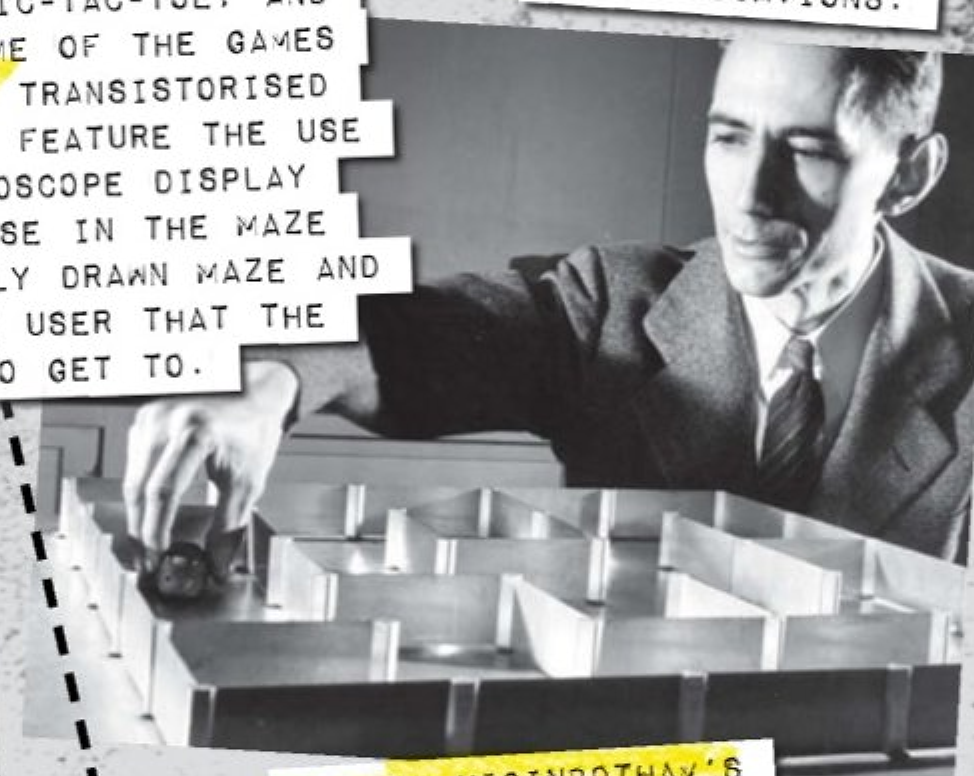
THREE OF THE CRTS USED FOR DATA STORAGE AND MONITORING ON THE EDSAC. THE MIDDLE CRT SHOWS THE TYPICALLY SEEN DOTTED AND DASH PATTERNS REPRESENTING MEMORY LOCATIONS.





TENNIS FOR TWO IS DEVELOPED AS A LAB DISPLAY FOR VISITORS BY WILLIAM HIGINBOTHAM. SHOWN TWICE, THE DISPLAY IS BUILT AROUND A TENNIS GAME BUILT AROUND AN ANALOG COMPUTER AND AN OSCILLOSCOPE. PLAYERS CAN'T ACTUALLY CONTROL ANYTHING, THEIR BUTTON WOULD MAKE THE BALL FLIP DIRECTIONS AND A DIAL WOULD SET VARIABLES IN EQUATIONS BUILT IN TO THE ANALOG COMPUTER.

MOUSE IN THE MAZE, TIC-TAC-TOE, AND BOUNCING BALL ARE SOME OF THE GAMES CREATED FOR THE TX-0 TRANSISTORISED COMPUTER AT MIT. ALL FEATURE THE USE OF THE TX-0'S OSCILLOSCOPE DISPLAY AND A LIGHT PEN. MOUSE IN THE MAZE FEATURED A DYNAMICALLY DRAWN MAZE AND CHEESE PLACED BY THE USER THAT THE "MOUSE" WOULD HAVE TO GET TO.





THE MARK I'S OPERATOR CONSOLE, SHOWING ITS CRT BASED MEMORY BANKS.

WILLIAM HIGINBOTHAM'S BROOKHAVEN EMPLOYEE BADGE, AROUND THE TIME HE CREATED THE TENNIS FOR TWO DISPLAY.



1953 1954 1955 **1956** 1957 **1958**

system. Yes, in these early days, CRTs were actually used for computer memory!

Alexander Douglas' Noughts And Crosses (or Tic-tac-toe as it's also known) also appropriated a CRT intended to show the computer's memory, in this case the very first stored program computer, the Edsac. A student at the University of Cambridge at the time, Alexander found a way to hack one of the memory dot matrix CRT displays to form a noughts and crosses grid and the required Xs and Os. Using the Edsac's main method of input – a rotary dial of the kind once on telephones – the player was able to 'dial in' their position on the game grid.

MORE VISUALS PLEASE

As the Fifties moved on, so did the advancements in computer games that were able to display more graphically-orientated objects related to the game. But it came with a continued cost – *very* expensive research equipment being dedicated to a single purpose.

In 1958, William Higinbotham found himself as head of the Brookhaven National Laboratory's Instrumentation Division. Located in the midst of rural Long Island, New York, the local residents weren't thrilled about a nuclear research facility in their midst. A concern only further fuelled by Cold War hysteria and the popular "creature mutated by nuclear radiation" monster films of the time. Wanting to conduct tours to prove how safe research at Brookhaven was, each division had to produce a display that summed up its research to visiting public. "I knew from past visitor days that people were not much interested in static exhibits. So for that year, I came up with an idea for a hands-on display – a CRT tennis game," said William in a later interview.

Using a custom-built analog computer he hooked up to an oscilloscope with a tiny 5" screen, William used the analog computer to compute gravity, wind speed, and the bounce (including off the net) of a ball to simulate a tennis game. All based on the analog input of the controls, which consisted of a big block of wood with a button and dial mounted on it. The player would use the button to 'hit' the ball and then use the dial to adjust the angle of the ball for the return

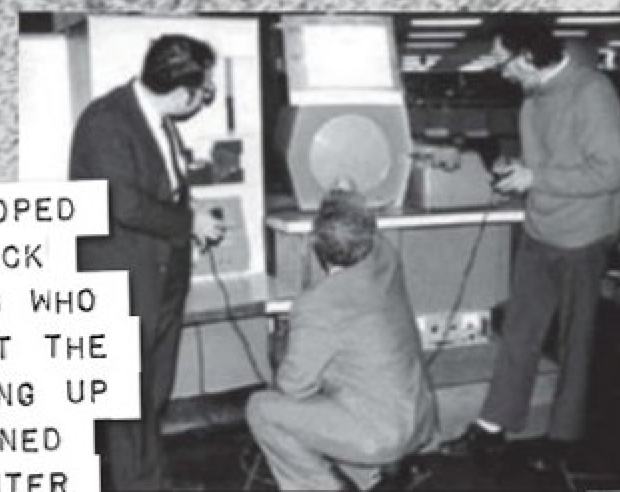
The result was *Tennis For Two*, a simulation of a tennis ball going back and forth on the tiny vector-generated screen. Vector CRT displays, for those not familiar, work on the concept of the CRT's beam directly moving from point to point combined with turning the beam on and off to form crisp dots and lines. The entire process is directly controlled by the computer, very similar to the previously mentioned etch-a-sketch analogy.

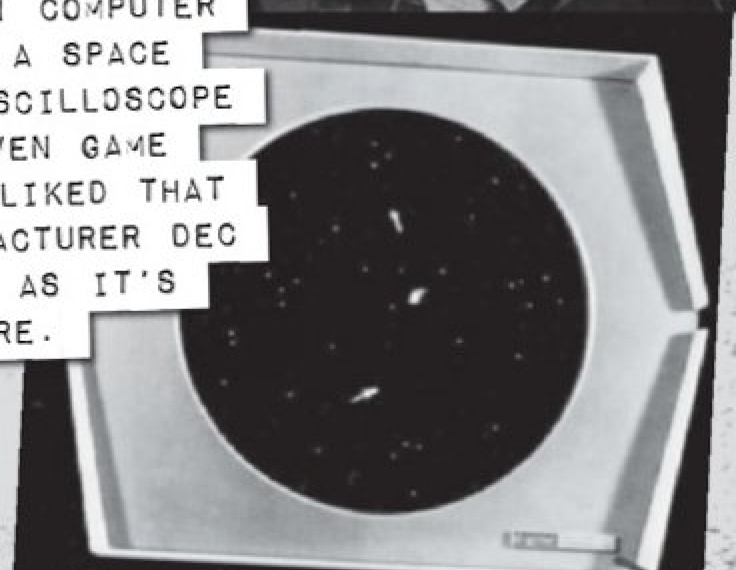
The design process that took about three weeks. William stated "I made some drawings, gave them to Bob, he made a patch board, we changed the things that didn't work, and got it running in time for the first tour." Shown once on visitor's day on 18 October, 1958 and again in 1959, the display was seen by relatively few people, other than the few hundred locals that came through the lab. In fact, if it hadn't been unsuccessfully used as an attempt at showing prior 'videogame' technology in lawsuits some 20 years later (unsuccessful because there was no actual video technology involved, nor any direct player-controlled objects,) it probably would never have been heard of again. But ultimately it showed those videos' promise in computer/user interaction for games and what was to come.

And what was to come was taking form south of there in a lab at MIT. The world's first transistorised computer had been built in 1955 through '56. The prototype for the later developed DEC PDP-1, this had been built for the US military as part of an effort of the Department of Defence-funded Lincoln Laboratory to create a transistorised version of the Whirlwind computer. The TX-0 was equipped with a dedicated 12" oscilloscope display capable of display 512 x 512 points in a 7 x 7" matrix area. Together with a lightpen for graphical input, another invention from Whirlwind, the TX-0 was ripe for researchers to create some unique interactive computing experiments. First was a small "ball" bouncing around from one edge of the screen to the other, then two grad students, Doug Ross and John



THE TECH MODEL RAILROAD CLUB HACKERS
Steve Russell, J.M. Graetz, Wayne Witanen, Alan Kotok, Robert Saunders, Peter Samson, Dan Edwards and a host of others formed the group of young people who the term 'hackers' was coined around. Their passion for technology and their predilection towards gaining access to it no matter what the legality, lead to major advances in computer design and programming. Most importantly they gave us *Spacewar!*, a sign for the future of electronic gaming.

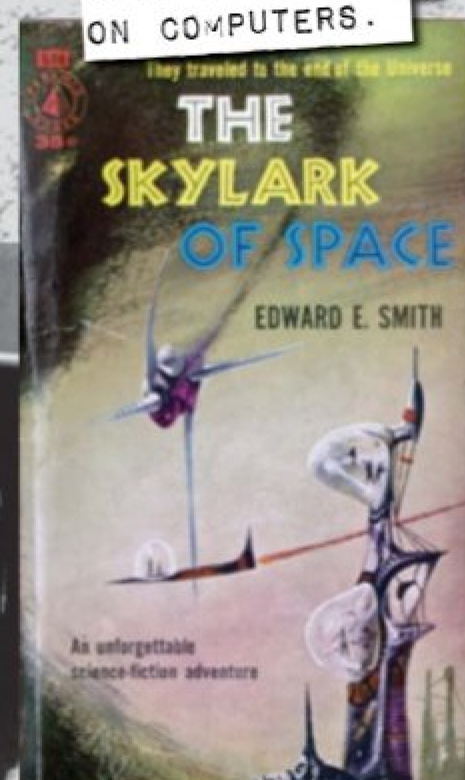






SPACEWAR! IS DEVELOPED AS A LATE NIGHT HACK BY A GROUP OF KIDS WHO LITERALLY WERE WHAT THE TERM "HACKER" SPRUNG UP TO DESCRIBE. DESIGNED ON THE PDP-1 COMPUTER TO SIMULATE A SPACE DUEL. THE OSCILLOSCOPE DISPLAY DRIVEN GAME IS SO WELL LIKED THAT PDP-1 MANUFACTURER DEC INCLUDES IT AS IT'S TEST SOFTWARE.

THE SKYLARK OF SPACE. THE NOVEL READ BY STEVE RUSSELL THAT INSPIRED HIM TO BEGIN WRITING SPACEWAR! AND EXPOSE A GENERATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO THE JOYS OF GAMING ON COMPUTERS.





THE HIGH LEVEL COMPUTER LANGUAGE BASIC IS INTRODUCED. PROGRAMMING IS MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE, LEADING TO A RENAISSANCE OF COMPUTER GAME PROGRAMMING IN THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES. THIS UPTAKE IN COMPUTER GAME CREATION CAUSES THE ENDING OF THE LONG DRY SPELL IN COMPUTER GAME DEVELOPMENT, STALLING SINCE THE DAYS OF SPACEWAR! AT MIT.

1959 1960 **1961** 1962 1963 **1964**

Ward wrote a "Mouse in Maze" program. It used the TX-0's light and allowed the user to draw a maze on the CRT screen. A small "blip" would search through the maze, looking for other "blips" that represented cheese wedges. It didn't take long for undergraduate kids, the first 'hackers,' to find the TX-0. After it was downgraded in its use in 1959, they began doing their own unique coding on it late at night. Doing things like hacking *Mouse In The Maze* to have martinis that would cause the mouse to act drunk, or making the TX-0 actually play music out of its built-in speaker.

The hackers were all from a student club called The Tech Model Railroad Club, which had been founded in 1946 as a club for model railroad hobbyists to meet and discuss the hobby. Building a huge model railroad setup interconnected with a large network of controls, switches and wires that stretched underneath the display, the large mess became known as the "Rats' Nest". Sloppy in its appearance, it was continuously tweaked and those who came up with new connections or features were called "hackers" and said to be "hacking". And thus the term hacker was born, also aptly describing their style of programming.

When the first PDP-1 in the world was installed in the lab next door (called the 'kludge room') in the autumn of 1961, these hackers wasted no time in sneaking in late at night and continuing their late night coding on this expensive hardware. It was here they produced the very first networked game, creating makeshift 'network' between the TX-0 and PDP-1 by rigging a wire between the two computers, and having two professors play each other by typing in cryptic chess moves that the other was to respond to by typing their next move. The catch was, each was told the other was playing a computer – a fact quickly discovered to not be true.

The hackers continued hacking away on the PDP-1, learning how to make its display do new tricks. One important one came by accident, and it involved the other legendary artificial intelligence guru, Professor Marvin Minsky. While working on a program to draw circles with multiple straight lines, he mistyped a mathematical instruction in the computer – and came up with an actual circle, something that had never been done before. A discovery so important, it would actually affect the field of mathematics but more importantly here, it would inspire the hackers.

These same hackers, lead by Steve Russell, also created a tour de force app for the PDP-1, a game called *Spacewar!*. Based on their favourite science fiction novel, *Skylark Of Space* from the Lensman series of novels by Edward E. Smith, PhD, the game allowed two ships to duel in space with the challenge of a constantly evolving set of physics-based challenges. It started out as a simple vector dot moving around the screen with the flipping of some of the PDP-1's front panel switches. The dots were expanded into 'torpedo'-like shapes, and then Steve added the very first collision detection. Then came the ships, and then gravity was added by Dan Edwards and a starfield by Peter Samson. The final game (although the fact that it was continuously hacked makes it hard to nail down a 'final' version) moved the control of the ships from front panel switches to a custom set of stick controllers Alan Kotok and Bob Saunders hacked in to the PDP-1.

During the entire process, the game simply sat in a drawer in the lab. Hackers didn't know any better because software to them was free, something meant to be shared. In fact, when ►

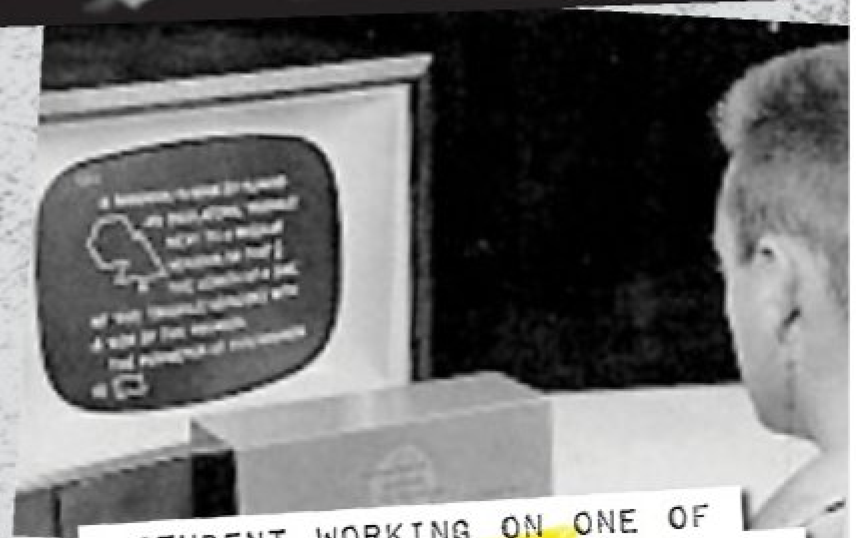
"It didn't take long for undergraduate kids, the first 'hackers', to begin doing their own coding on the TX-0 at night"



IVAN SUTHERLAND
The computer graphics pioneer, his invention of Sketchpad was the first computer graphics tour de force. Creating the first tangible graphical user interface along with algorithms for rotation, resizing, and joining graphics elements into full figures, he also invented the first clipping algorithm which allowed zooming in on objects. A pioneer in virtual reality, his students also became some of the most influential in graphics, including Hentri Gouraud (Gouraud shading,) Frank Crow (antialiasing,) Edwin Catmul (co-founder of Pixar,) and Alan Kay (Smalltalk, modern GUIs.)



THE GRAPHICS TABLET-LIKE SKETCHPAD BEING DEMONSTRATED BY IVAN SUTHERLAND.



A STUDENT WORKING ON ONE OF THE VERY FIRST PLATO TERMINALS FROM THE EARLY SIXTIES. NOTICE THE ADVANCED USAGE OF BASIC GRAPHICS AND TEXT ON THE SCREEN. SOMETHING UNHEARD OF AT A TIME BEFORE RASTER-BASED DISPLAYS WERE COMMON.



THE CREATORS OF BASIC
Thomas Kurtz and John Kemeny were interested in making computer programming more accessible to the average students. At a time when programming meant low-level languages like Assembly and a required background in mathematics or the sciences, such a concept was revolutionary and had far-reaching consequences. Spreading across mainframe and mini-computers, by the age of the microcomputer in the Seventies and Eighties BASIC was the de facto language to learn to program with. Many of today's great game programmers owe their gratitude to these two men.



PLATO III GOES ONLINE WITH THE POWERFUL TUTOR PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE AND HIGH RESPONSE TIME FOR REAL-TIME USAGE. IT'S FURTHER DEVELOPED INTO PLATO IV BY 1972 AND INCLUDES ACCESS BY ADVANCED BITMAPPED ORANGE PLASMA DISPLAYS. TOGETHER, THESE SYSTEM RESOURCES GIVE RISE TO THE FIRST NETWORKED MULTIPLAYER GAMES, FIRST-PERSON GAMES, AND MULTI-PERSON SHOOTERS.

1965 1966 1967

it became such a hit with the PDP's creators (former MIT students themselves), DEC, they included it as test software with every PDP-1 they sold. As they ran it and shut it off on every PDP-1 before shipping it, if the recipient turned on the computer and *Spacewar!* wasn't running, then the computer had been damaged during shipping.

Alas, this was pretty much it for graphical computer gaming development for many years. Only fifty-five PDP-1s were produced, meaning a very limited distribution of *Spacewar!*. Add to that the fact that most of the computer labs they were installed in severely cracked down on the kind of dedicated usage needed for its play or development meant the possibility of another such game coming along any time soon was nil. In fact, from then until the Seventies and the PLATO network, any future work done in the computer medium was simply modification of *Spacewar!*.

TWO STEPS BACK FIVE STEPS FORWARD

That didn't mean that computerised game or computer graphics development stopped completely though. They just went in two separate directions. Computer graphics, because it required very expensive and advanced equipment that was at that time still very much evolving, was relegated purely to closed door research. Ivan Sutherland's Sketchpad built with the TX-2 computer at MIT (think graphics tablet with a light pen,) and his late Sixties work on 3D graphics at the University of Utah with David Evans.

Game development itself just went with what was more commonly accessible – the teletype terminals and their new counterparts the CRT-based text terminals appearing along with the advent of timesharing operating systems. The newly emerging higher level computer languages like FOCAL and BASIC meant electronic game rules and themes continued to evolve.

Games like *Lunar Lander, Fran The Barmaid, The Civil War Game, The Pollution Game, Artillery Game, Carnival Game, Horserace* and more traditional fare like dice games, slot machines, Tic-tac-toe, Hangman, Blackjack, and Monopoly. The possibilities of games that could be played electronically seemed endless, with new games appearing all the time.

Ranging from plain text games to clever hacks of data terminals that utilised text character to form crude graphical representations, their distribution was fuelled primarily by the mainframe and mini-computer manufacturers themselves. DEC's unique DECUS (Digital Equipment Computer Users' Society) software distribution catalogue was probably the largest, and ensured these games were easily ordered alongside their more sombre and in demand computer applications and utilities.

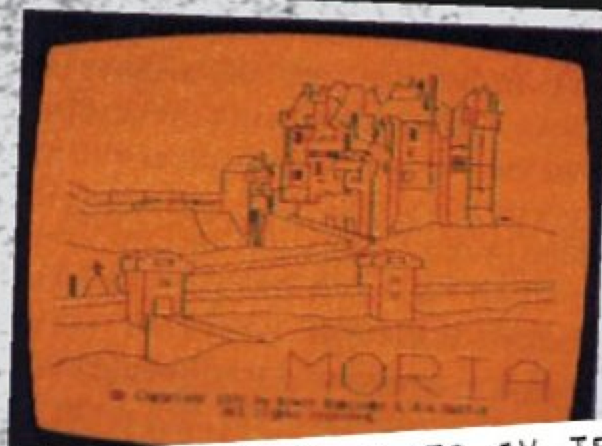
PLATO

Though most of this system's games came in the early to mid Seventies, it's still important to mention PLATO for its groundbreaking work. Designed to be a high response 'real-time' computing and networking environment at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, in 1972 the introduction of its PLATO IV plasma-infused bitmap display terminal made incredible advances in computer gaming possible.

Empire, a game based on *Star Trek* and written in 1973, was the first game to introduce

> **"Empire, a game based on Star Trek and written in 1973, was the first to introduce multiplayer shootouts"**







THE ADVANCED PLATO IV TERMINAL FROM THE VERY EARLY SEVENTIES. FEATURING BOTH A KEYBOARD AND TOUCH SCREEN INPUT, AS WELL AS AN ADVANCED BITMAPPED ORANGE PLASMA DISPLAY. WHEN USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ADVANCED PLATO SYSTEM AND ITS FEATURES, A UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT FOR GAME PLAYING AND CREATION WAS BORN.





THE FOCAL PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE IS INVENTED FOR DEC'S PDP-8 MINI-COMPUTERS. AS WITH BASIC, THE RESULT IS A BIG UPSWING IN GAMES DEVELOPED FOR THE DEC LINE, INCLUDING NOW LEGENDARY GAMES LIKE LUNAR LANDER. DEC'S USER-CREATED SOFTWARE COLLECTIVE, DECUS, MAKES SURE THAT THESE GAMES ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE TO THE DEC COMPUTER COMMUNITY.





RALPH BAER, NOLAN BUSHNELL, TED DABNEY

These three men are more responsible than anybody for why we're here today. They had the foresight to try and bring the world of electronic and computer gaming to consumers. Tapping in to a commonly available resource to cut costs, the television set, in the process they invented videogames. Though Nolan has not always been willing to share the spotlight with the other two, we're equally grateful to them all!

1968 1969 1970

networked multiplayer shootouts. Up to seven teams and fifty players could participate, duelling with each other to take control of the galaxy.

Airfight was introduced on PLATO in 1973, a 3D flight simulator by Brand Fortner which provided realistic wireframe flight simulation six years before subLogic's famous *FS-1* for the Apple II (later branded as *Microsoft Flight Simulator*.)

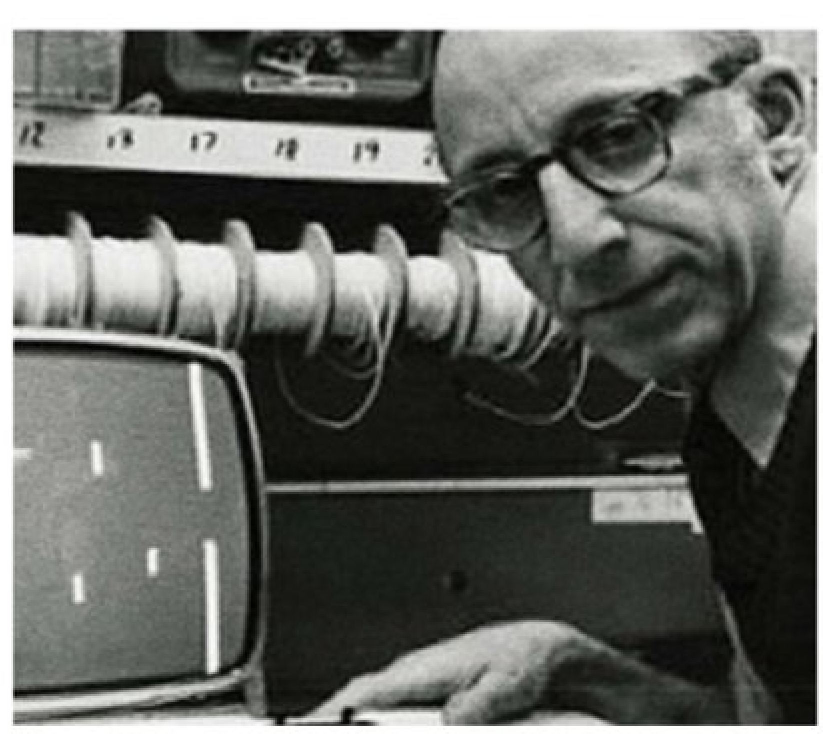
Then there was *Spasm*, released in March 1974. A 32-player game by Jim Bowery, players flew around in space appearing to each other as pseudo 3D wire-frame space ships.

Panther appeared in 1975, a multiplayer first-person tank-driving simulation preceding Atari's *Battlezone* by half a decade. Fifty players was the all-time record in this game, though theoretically it could handle an unlimited amount if the mainframe and the network were robust enough. The object, unlike *Battlezone*, was to attack and destroy the opposing team's base.

Also in 1975 *dnd* was released, a dungeon crawl game heavily inspired by *Dungeons & Dragons*. Gameplay and graphics were very similar to the later *Ultima* series in the Eighties, and its multi-level dungeons and teleporters to move back and forth between levels are reminiscent of later games like *Gauntlet* as well.

Many aspects of PLATO actually preceded today's commonly accepted social gaming features. In 1973, the world's first message board, PLATO Notes was introduced, as was Term-Talk for instant messaging and together with the games a large online community spawned.

One game that took advantage of the networked messaging was *Moria*, which rounds out the (by no means complete) list of important PLATO games. *Moria* was another dungeon crawl-style game, where in this case parties of up to ten players travel throughout dynamically generated dungeons. Innovation wise, team members were able to use a messaging system inspired by PLATO Notes to talk to each other, and all dungeon activity was represented in a first-person wireframe rendering.



» Ralph Baer's contributions were well noted. He received a National Medal of Technology award for his part in the invention of video games.

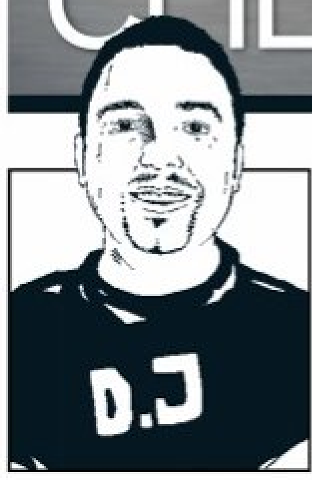
ENTER VIDEOGAMES...

Simultaneous to much of this work, in 1966 Ralph Baer set out to create electronic games that interfaced with a standard television set. After several such devices were completed, his final device in the series – the Brown Box – was licensed out first to RCA and then to Magnavox. Just as that was occurring, Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney began their odyssey to bring electronic games and television sets into the arcade.

Both the Baer and Bushnell/Dabney devices sought to do what all the previous efforts had failed to do, mainly because of the environment and intended use of those previous efforts. In this case the intended use was simple: it was commercial, intended to reach everyone they possibly could. They were able to lower the cost of electronic gaming and make it more accessible to the average person by leveraging a display technology many people already had – a standard television set. Creating custom dedicated 'computers' (which are really called 'state machines') to play the games they wanted on them, the real challenge was in accessing the TV via the video signal. A process that involved having to hack in and generate objects via the TV's video decoder. They were of course successful, and by the early Seventies it was clear: videogames had been born!

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS

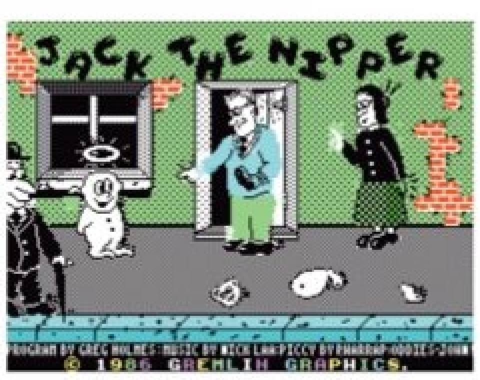


If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you really want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune to procure, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than five English pounds…

JACK THE NIPPER

INFO

- **SYSTEM:** SPECTRUM
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** C64, AMSTRAD, CPC, MSX
- **RELEASED:** 1986
- **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



We've been keen to track down *Jack The Nipper*'s developer for some time, as we've got a number of burning questions we'd love to ask him. Was *Jack The Nipper* autobiographical? Was Jack based on *The Beano*'s Dennis the Menace? Did you enjoy creating the sequel? What happened to *Jack The Nipper 3*? Was John Holmes, who was also on the team, Greg's brother? And is it *that* John Holmes? These are questions we've been longing to hear the answers to for some time, but Greg continues to elude us, despite a number of valiant efforts by our many freelancers.

When *Jack The Nipper* was first released back in 1986 it created a deserved stir, because it was one of the few games at the time that really allowed you to act like a little shit. *Skool Daze*'s Eric arguably got the ball rolling when he first fired his catapult into Mr Thwacker's arse, but the maniacal mayhem you could unleash in *Jack The Nipper* was on a totally different level.

Computers could be shorted, cats could be scared, precious objets d'art could be smashed and prize plants could be destroyed with weed killer. Nearly every flick screen that Jack ran through allowed for potential mischief, and it was down to the player to work out the best way to raise his naughty meter.

Every item in the game could be dropped from a height and broken in order to raise Jack's Naughtyometer, but get inventive, by using gum to seal the teeth in Gummo's Chomping Molars, for example, and you'll see your precious meter rocket. There were certainly puzzle elements to *Jack The Nipper*, but the payoff was always worth it.



[C64] Hit someone with the peashooter on the C64 and their face changes colour to show their rage. Run, Jack. Run.

It continues to look glorious as well. Back in 1986, Jack looked as if he'd just jumped out of the pages of *The Beano* or *The Dandy*, and today it remains a treat to look at as well, with cheerful cartoon visuals and exceptionally detailed locations that look like a comic book come to life.

While we're obviously big fans of the CPC's detailed graphics and better use of colour (compared to the Spectrum and MSX versions) we find ourselves getting continually drawn to the C64 version of the game. It feels a little rougher around the edges, but the colourful palette makes it feel more like the comic books of old that we're guessing Greg was aiming for.

Jack's naughty antics may seem quaint by today's standards, but if you were a kid in the Eighties, his exploits were amazing, allowing you to do everything you wanted to do without the dreadful trip to the headmaster's office. Of course, Greg was keen to show that naughtiness didn't always pay, with Jack receiving a sound beating from irked victims that would eventually result in severe nappy rash and the loss of a life. We can only imagine what the papers would say if that happened today…



[Amstrad CPC] Lord Sugar's machine received a decent conversion that looks nicer than the Speccy. There. We said it.



[Spectrum] Pick up this weed killer, take it to the garden and see what happens. The gardener will not be happy…

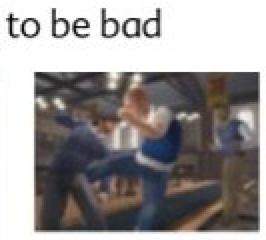
BAD TO THE BONE More games where it was good to be bad



Skool Daze Writing on blackboards, firing catapults at teachers and stealing answers to tests was all in a day's work for Eric. Its sequel remains just as much fun.



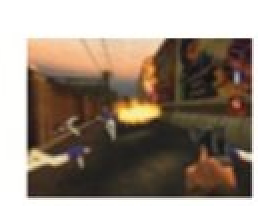
Carmageddon Add the required patch; then get lots of points for running over as many humans as possible. We may be in need of some serious help…



Bully A brilliant game that builds on elements of *Skool Daze*, but takes it in interesting new directions. It's also crying out for a next-gen sequel. Make it happen, Rockstar.



How To Be A Complete Bastard Puking, urination, and farting on partygoers were key to the success of this adaptation of Adrian Edmondson's popular book.



Postal 2 *The Daily Mail* despised this game. Hardly surprising when you could incinerate people, then put out the flames by urinating on them.

TALES FROM THE RETRO CRYPT

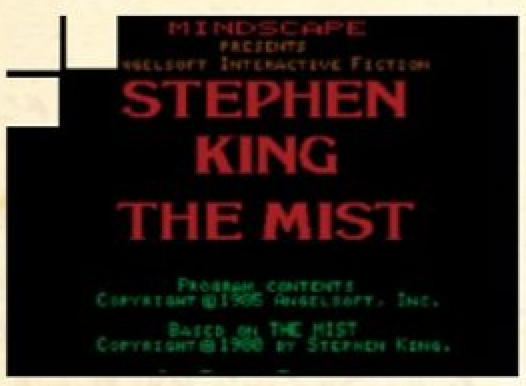
To celebrate the season of the witch, Retro Gamer has spoken to the creators of four iconic horror games to share their experiences and discover how they injected horror and fear into several distinct genres, spanning three generations of hardware

Retro Gamer

Chapter 1 – Tales of…

The Mist

In gaming circles, Stephen King's The Mist is best known as the 'science gone awry' story that inspired Half-Life. Yet the novella itself was adapted into its very own text adventure game in 1985. Martyn Carroll discovers how writer Raymond Benson enveloped gamers within The Mist



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** MINDSCAPE
- » **DEVELOPER:** ANGELSOFT
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PLATFORM:** PC, APPLE II, APPLE MAC
- » **GENRE:** TEXT ADVENTURE

This is what happened. In 1984, American children's author Mercer Mayer and his business partner John Sansevere founded Angelsoft in White Plains, New York. Their idea was to develop adventure game software for home computers based solely on licensed properties in the hope of attracting casual gamers. The plan was in place, but they struggled to negotiate any suitable licences, so Mercer went to see a man about a dog. A dog named Cujo.

Published in 1981, *Cujo* was Stephen King's grim tale of what happens when good pets go bad. The story culminates with Donna Trenton and her young son Tad getting attacked in their car by a rabid St Bernard. During the ordeal, Donna wishes that Tad was back at home, tucked up in bed reading "one of his Mercer Mayer books". This reference gave Mercer the perfect icebreaker. "I called King and we chatted for a while," he says, "then I asked him what he could offer us. It turned out that every one of his books had already been optioned by movie studios, ruling them all out. He went to speak to his people then came back and told me there was actually one story available – *The Mist.*"

King wrote *The Mist* in 1976 and it first appeared in Dark Forces, a collection of horror stories from various authors. It tells the tale of Bridgton, a small New England town smothered by an unnatural fog that unleashes terrible creatures. Most of the action takes place inside a supermarket where a number of survivors, including the story's narrator David Drayton, hole up from the horrors outside – only to discover that evil also walks among them.

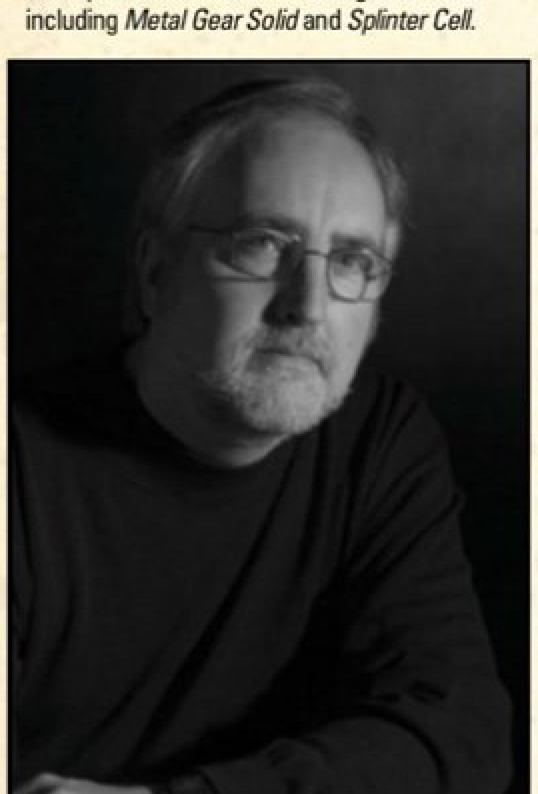
Angelsoft licensed *The Mist* in late 1984 and it immediately made people sit up and take note. "*The Mist* deal was significant to us," says Mercer. "It opened the door to other deals, Bond being the first." The company acquired the rights to *A View To A Kill*, the upcoming Bond movie that would premiere in summer 1985. As the deals were being done, Angelsoft hired programmers to develop a custom adventure game system. The framework was in place – it just needed someone to fill it with locations, people and puzzles. Enter Raymond Benson, an author who happened to be both a keen gamer and an expert on all things 007.

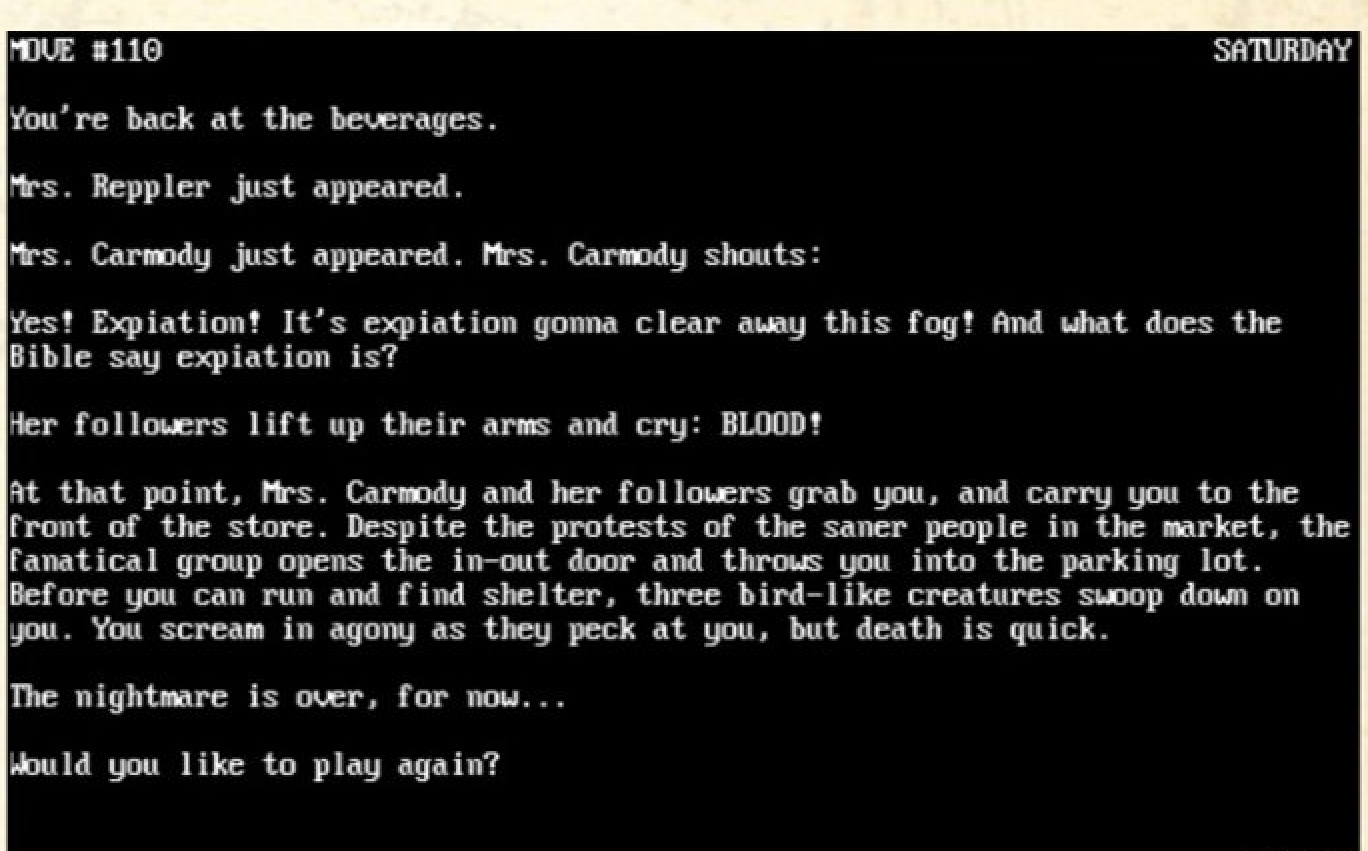
"My book *The James Bond Bedside Companion* had just been published in November 1984," says Raymond. "I was living in New York City at the time and I had an agent who knew I enjoyed games. I was a huge Infocom fan – I was really into *Zork* and its sequels. Angelsoft needed a writer for *The Mist* and *A View To A Kill*, and my agent immediately thought of me. I was hired as a freelance writer and designer to do both games."

Beginning with *The Mist* in January 1985, Raymond joined a small team that consisted of a producer and several programmers. The first thing he did was give King a call. "I spoke with Stephen on the phone. It was a short conversation.

> "I WAS A HUGE INFOCOM FAN, I WAS REALLY INTO ZORK"

» *The Mist* (game) author Raymond Benson has since penned a number of videogame novels including *Metal Gear Solid* and *Splinter Cell*.





» [PC] If the monsters outside don't get you, crazy Mrs Carmody and her zealots soon will.

SCARIEST MOMENT

Despite Raymond's reservations about the game's ability to scare players, *The Mist* does serve up its fair share of chilling moments. This is especially true once you escape the frantic scenes within the supermarket and start to creep around town with just a puny pistol to defend yourself against the awful, bloated things that emerge from the fog. Those who have read the novella or seen the film will no doubt remember the oversized, eight-legged inhabitants of the store just across the supermarket's parking lot. Anyone got any Raid?



» The game came with a fold-out map of Bridgton. "The map was a marketing department thing," says Raymond. "They wanted to give the player just an idea of what the town was like."



> **"I spoke with Stephen King on the phone. It was a short conversation. He basically said, 'Do whatever you want'"**

I asked him if he cared if I invented things that weren't in his story or deleted stuff, and asked his opinion on a couple aspects. He basically said, 'Do whatever you want'."

Raymond wasn't about to mess with the story for the sake of it however, and changes were made only to aid the interactive experience. Like a lot of King's tales, *The Mist* starts slowly, with Drayton and his family surveying the after-effects of a freak storm that batters their lakeside home. It's only when Drayton and his young son Billy travel into town for supplies that the story shifts into high gear. The game omits the ominous build-up and begins with just Drayton – or more specifically, 'you' – inside the supermarket at the precise moment when the mist rolls in and all hell breaks loose.

The novella paints an increasingly bleak picture in which Drayton's only hope is to somehow keep himself and his son alive. The game instead introduces a clear goal – return home and rescue Billy (who sensibly didn't tag along to the supermarket). "I figured the main point of the game would be to escape the town and kill as many of the creatures as you could," says Raymond. "The biggest challenge was to make it scary. I'm not sure if I succeeded at that – it's kind of hard for a text adventure to be scary – but I think the story came across as interesting and compelling. It's always the goal of an adapter to create something that complements the source and yet expands on it."

Development of the game lasted roughly three months and was largely hassle-free. However, Raymond remembers being frustrated with Angelsoft's adventure scripting language (codenamed ASG). "Angelsoft's parser was nowhere near as sophisticated as Infocom's, and I was disappointed that I couldn't do some of the things that Infocom did with its games. But it turned out okay in the end."

The game was published by Mindscape in 1985. As soon as it was finished, Raymond started work on *A View To A Kill* and followed that with a second Bond adventure, *Goldfinger.* The 007 games were more sophisticated than *The Mist*, but not necessarily better in the mind of the author. "For Bond, you needed more than just a text adventure, you needed graphics," he says. "It didn't translate well. *The Mist* was moody and spooky – it was a good story for the medium. It just worked better."

These days, Raymond is best known as an award-winning author of more than 25 books, including six original James Bond novels. He hasn't worked directly on a computer game for many years now, yet he still has a strong interest in gaming, in particular the adventure genre. "In the late Eighties I got into the gaming industry full-time and worked for some companies like Origin Systems and MicroProse. I especially like *The Mist*, but I think the best game I ever did was *Dark Seed II* for Cyberdreams. It's too bad that text and graphic adventures have gone out of fashion. I've always enjoyed games with interactive stories.

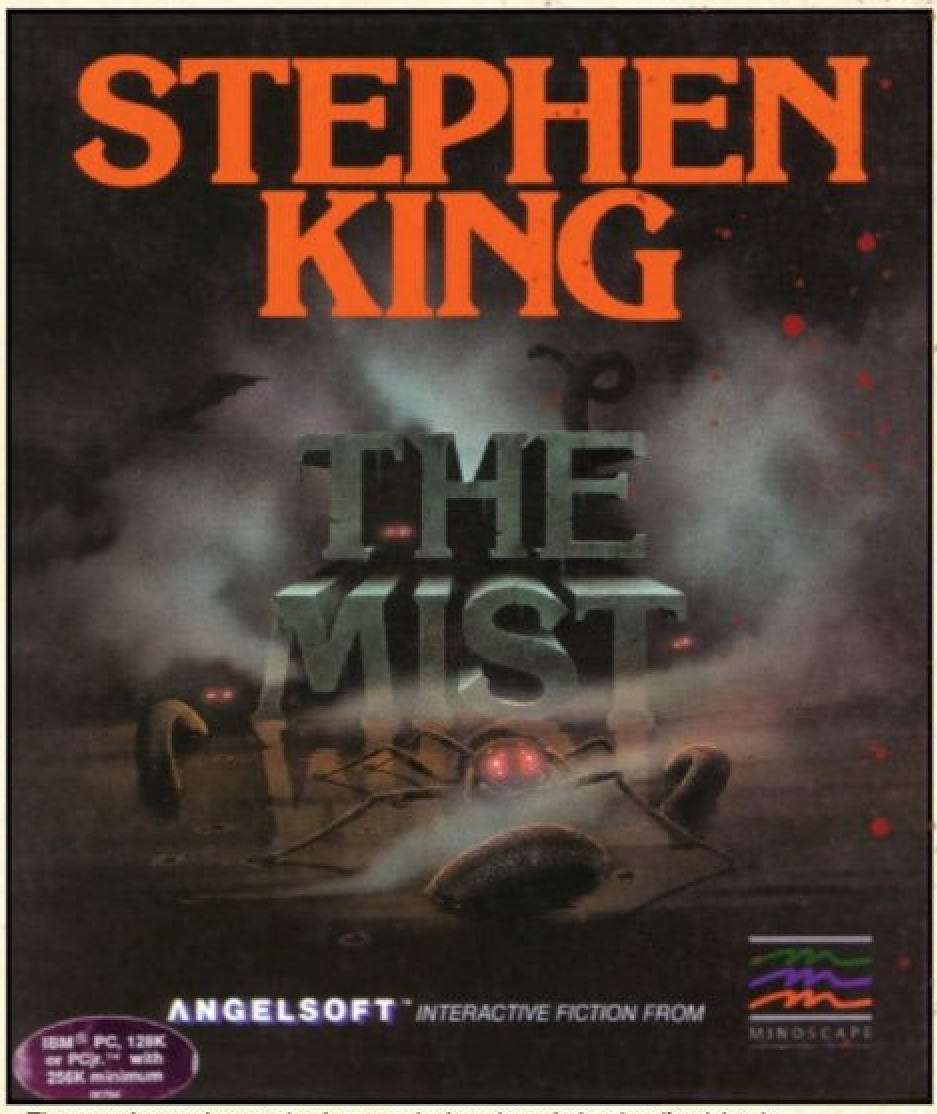
"It seems to me like King's *The Stand* would make a great game…"



» [PC] Like the best text adventures, there's a strong desire to unlock new locations, face challenges, and survive...



» [PC] Carefully does it… Sometimes in adventure games, merely examining something is not enough.



» The game's premium packaging was designed to mimic a hardback book.

THE OTHER HALF

When you consider how many films, TV serials, comics and even stage productions have been based on Stephen King's work, it's surprising that there has only ever been *The Mist* and one other game directly derived from one of his novels – *The Dark Half.* This point-and-click graphic adventure was developed for the PC by Symtus in 1992 and has earned a reputation as one of the worst examples of the genre. Yet while it falls far short of LucasArts' SCUMM games, largely thanks to dumb dialogue and silly puzzles, it's nowhere near as bad as some claim. Certainly, fans of the book will have fun playing through this very Nineties game.



Chapter 2 – Tales of…

The 7th Guest

It's been nearly twenty years since the doors of the haunted Stauf mansion were first opened, unveiling their dark secrets, fiendish puzzles and ghostly inhabitants. Martyn Casserly crosses the threshold once more in search of the real story



» [PC] Mansion for sale. One careful owner. May need some internal work and the odd exorcism.

From the beautifully animated 3D mansion to the groundbreaking full-motion videos of ghostly apparitions, Trilobyte's spooky puzzler introduced players to what could be achieved with ingenuity, imagination, and a new thing called a CD-ROM.

"Rob [Landeros] and I were really into the old TV show *Twin Peaks*," says co-creator Graeme Devine, "and the company we worked for, Virgin Games, had the rights to the board game *Clue*. So our initial thinking was that we would make a version of *Clue* with a *Twin Peaks* feeling to it. We also loved the old movies *House On Haunted Hill* and *The Haunting*, so slowly the idea morphed into a haunted house."

The house became the home of Henry Stauf, an evil toymaker whose creations claim the lives of several children through a strange virus. As the game begins, the player enters the mansion to find it populated with bizarre puzzles to solve, and ghosts roaming the halls playing out a tragic story.

"Initially his name was Henry Steeple," Graeme admits, "Matthew Costello came up with Henry Stauf because he thought it was good to have his last name be an acronym of Faust. I think we just wanted to find the creepy angle. Toy maker: creepy…" The bulk of the puzzle design was on the shoulders of co-creator Rob Landeros, a long time fan of pen and paper brainteasers.

"I think my main inspiration was a little game called *The Fool's Errand*," Rob states. "It was a series of puzzles of various types with a tarot card-related story and theme. Every time you solved a puzzle, you would get a piece of a map that would lead you to the final goal – that's how we structured *The 7th Guest*. Most of the house is inaccessible to start with, but each time you solve a puzzle or solve a riddle, another part of the house is opened to you."

Players had to contend with an impressive array of logic puzzles involving wordplay, mazes, slicing up cakes, classic board games like Reversi and chess, and deciphering patterns. But the real star of the show was the lusciously animated



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** TRILOBYTE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PLATFORM:** PC, CD-I, MAC OS
- » **GENRE:** POINT-AND-CLICK HORROR

THE SCARES UNDER THE STAIRS



Under the house lurked a ridiculously difficult maze. As players arrived at one dead end after another, Stauf's ghostly voice would ask 'Feeling lonely?'. To which even the most hardened explorer would whimper 'Yes…'

"The solution to the maze was on a rug in one of the bedrooms," reveals Graeme. "We thought people would either copy that down, or realize that turning every right would work. Back then there was no internet and our beta testing was, well, just us. On the other hand people still come up to me today saying 'Feeling lonely?' and discuss that maze!"



» [iOS] Shot against a makeshift blue screen, the actors are then placed in the game. The halo edging proved difficult to remove, so became a ghostly aura instead.

mansion itself. From the stained glass window in the entrance hall, to the iconic staircase that dominated the lower floor, every location was an impressive artistic feat and a world away from the typically blocky graphics of the time.

"Our original idea was to find a mansion," says Rob, "take a camera in there, set it up on a tripod in the middle of the room, then scan 360 degrees and use that. So we found the largest house in Oregon… but there were no mansions there that had 100ft art galleries. They were very claustrophobic and it didn't work. Then one of our artists, Robert Stein, played with 3D Studio and put together a room, animated it, and had furniture floating around eerily. It was kind of a revelation at that point and we said 'Yeah, we're gonna do it that way'."

The introduction of the ghostly video scenes that the player encounters was also something truly revolutionary. "There had been the *Sherlock Holmes* games which had tiny 160x100 videos," Graeme remembers, "but no one had tried full screen and certainly not in SVGA. A lot of people thought what we were doing was impossible and that our demos were smoke and mirrors."

Assembling a cast from Oregon's thriving acting community, the team set about capturing the spectres that would inhabit the house and reveal the terrible story of Stauf. "We filmed for two days on SVHS," says Graeme, "against a blue screen that wasn't really blue and that we broke (one of the actors fell through it), then repaired with blue painting tape. All in all, that's not the best way to film ghosts. We left the halo around the actors in place because we couldn't clean it, and made it into a 'ghostly aura'."

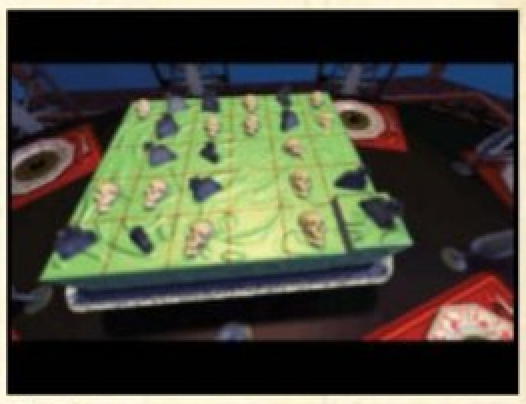
A game of *The 7th Guest*'s size and ambition required huge amounts of storage and advanced multimedia capabilities. Something made possible by the arrival of the CD-ROM. "It was timing," states Rob. "That tool was there and we were one of the first to use it. Only a handful of people had CD-ROM drives in their computers when we first started looking into them. People were still thinking of doing things the old fashioned way, pixel by pixel, and building up graphics. The debate was how do you fill up a CD-ROM? And even if you did, how can you screen video? Those were the questions… and we solved them." The game was released on the Mac and PC in 1993 and sold over two million copies. The game also spawned a sequel *The 11th Hour*, and was ported to iOS in 2010.

"We were expecting some success," admits Graeme, "but we didn't expect people to rush out and buy CD-ROM drives just so they could play a game. We were blown away by the reaction. Moving real 3D that looked nice. The puzzles were fun and the story, while a bit goofy, held your attention. More than that, it was a game you could sit down with as a family and play. It wasn't *Doom*. There were a lot of people who wrote to us saying they took turns with the mouse to play the game, and while a lot of the game was spooky, it was *Scooby Doo* spooky, which you can sit through with a family. That said, people did seem to get really scared playing the game alone in the dark.'

"It was a game you could sit down with your family and play"



» Rob Landeros & Graeme Devine, whose love of old horror movies and a good mystery led to Stauf's Mansion being created.



» [iOS] A puzzle where the player had to divide the cake into slices which each contained two skulls, two headstone and one empty space.



» [iOS] The use of video footage allowed for creepy moments like this when hands reach out of a painting.

OLD MAN STAUF BUILT A HOUSE, AND FILLED IT WITH HIS TOYS…



There are many things hidden away in Stauf's mansion that can bring a chill to the heart. Ghosts roaming the halls acting out their murderous, final moments, Skeletons playing church organs, flying cakes, paintings that suddenly grow hands that reach for you as you pass by, and a cursed toymaker that sits in his lair awaiting the soul of his final guest. But for the designers and programmers of this edifice of evil there was something even more terrifying that haunted their dreams.

"The only thing that scared me was the backup system we used at the office," Graeme reveals. "We didn't have enough hard drive space to have the whole house on the network at once, so we swapped floors between the first floor and second floor when we were working – so we ALL had to work on one of the floors. It came down to a DAT tape keeping the game alive. When one of us messed up we had to yell out the window 'I messed up!' as loud as we could. We yelled a lot."

Chapter 3 – Tales of…

Realms Of The Haunting

In the winter of 1996, publisher Gremlin Interactive unleashed an action-horror classic onto an unsuspecting gaming public. Cowering in a corner is Graeme Mason as he talks to producer Paul Green about the ideas and development that spawned this battle between good and evil. . .

"I started at Gremlin as a game designer although I also did a fair amount of work as an artist," begins Paul, boasting the same Romero-esque flowing locks of fifteen years ago, "and we were always open to game pitches. One day Tony Crowther approached us with a cool game engine and an idea – a horror-themed game."

Crowther was well known to Gremlin founder Ian Stewart as they had worked together during the company's 8-bit phase over ten years earlier; Gremlin liked what the veteran programmer had to say and Paul was soon on board as well. "The original idea of a horror game was Tony's," he explains, "while I conjured up the setting, mythology, characters and plot."

Despite its obvious roots in the FPS genre, Gremlin were keen to expand on the template laid down by the success of *Doom*. Fortunately, Tony Crowther had a plan. "Tony thought that a combination of two popular genres – FPS and point-and-click – would work very well together," recalls Paul. And in addition to the main game, the production team were enthusiastically working on another, oft-maligned addition that Gremlin considered key to generating the right atmosphere in *Realms Of The Haunting*: full-motion video.

"A tremendous amount of effort went into the cut-scenes," says Paul proudly, "and we hired a company, Bright Light Studios, to do the shooting, prosthetics, make-up, props and costumes." Director Alan Coltman oversaw the production, most of which was filmed in front of blue screens. "We felt it was vital to developing the plot," continues Paul, "and Alan worked very closely with the actors and Bright Light to make sure we got what he wanted. He did a first class job."



» [PC] The first encounter with the resident demons.



» [PC] The game helpfully identifies key characters.

> "The art team knew Realms was a big project right from the start"

With so much video planned, it was an essential part of Realms' development. Coltman was also responsible for editing the footage back at Gremlin, where together with the creation and digital composition of the background scenes, numerous sound effects and the moody score were added. It was clear *Realms Of The Haunting* was a game of considerable scope. "The art and programming team knew Realms was a big project right from the start," verifies Paul, "but when the other departments began to see the final composites of the cut-scenes, everyone knew just how big it a deal it was."

We run screaming back to the start of development now and quiz Paul further on

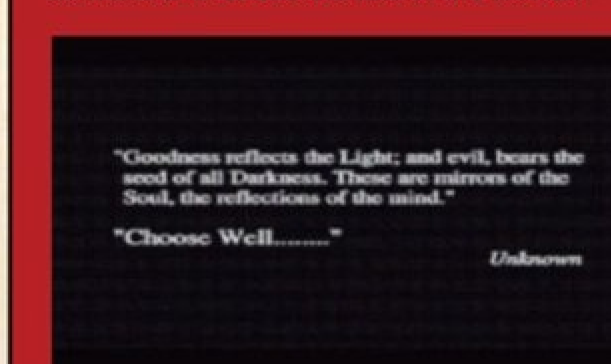


In the know

- » **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN INTERACTIVE LTD
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1996 (UK) 1997 (US)
- » **PLATFORM:** PC-DOS AND WINDOWS
- » **GENRE:** ACTION ADVENTURE HORROR

Plotting the ancient battle

Realms Of The Haunting begins with the main character, Adam Randall, returning to Cornwall for his father's funeral. His death occurred under mysterious circumstances, which have triggered a series of inexplicable visions of a house that Adam has no recollection of. Eventually our hero locates the house and discovers it to be the home of a powerful French sorcerer, Claude Florentine, who is attempting to unleash a horde of demons. As Adam discovers, the forces of evil are rarely easily controlled. With the assistance of a beautiful psychic named Rebecca Trevisard, Adam must defeat the demons and decide the fate of the world…





» [PC] The inventory where Adam can utilise his objects.

REALMS OF THE PETAIFIED

"What we wanted was a sense that the game was getting more intense the longer you played," explains Paul Green. "We created some scary scenes, but this was what we wanted: a creeping sense of doom." Paul cites the climax of the game as perhaps the most pant-wetting scene as Adam Randall seeks to escape the terrifying clutches of the evil Dodger. We prefer Adam and Rebecca's first meeting with the demonic Belial. Appearing in a flawless laboratory coat, narrow-rimmed glasses and gloves made from human skin, he clicks portentously from the darkness before uttering the ominous words: "Humans do still bleed, don't they? Splendid…" with a horrifying lack of emotion.



his inspiration for the intricate background and storyline to *Realms*. Surprisingly the game's plot and ambience took its cue from different influences, as he explains. "Firstly, I was an avid table-top RPG player and from my early teens played games such as *Call Of Cthulhu* and *Runequest*. I love creating worlds and all the stuff that makes them work, so this experience was very helpful." Strangely, although Paul mentions Cthulhu, the works of HP Lovecraft were apparently not an influence in themselves.

"I'm obviously familiar with his work and the games that have spawned from it, yet the inspiration for *Realms* came from religion, both orthodox and unorthodox, and the theories that go with them." Consequently, Paul built a story using mainly Hebrew texts on the realms of Heaven, Earth and Hell and the roles of angels and demons. Soon he was creating a workable mythology based on these ancient writings as well as other sources such as the book *The Holy Blood And The Holy Grail*, upon which Dan Brown based his 2003 bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*.

For the sombre, oppressive mood of the game, Paul recalled some cinematic favourites. "One film in particular was more inspirational than others: Michael Mann's *The Keep*. I just loved the creeping sense of doom and horror it created. Another was John Carpenter's *The Thing*, which you can clearly see in the title sequence to the game." With a technical design in place from Tony Crowther, plot, background and characters from Paul, and the FMV lensing with Alan Coltman at the helm, *Realms Of The Haunting* was moving along at a demonic pace. Surely there were complications?

"Tony was and still is an ace programmer," beams Paul, "and there were many days when he would shrug and say to us that something couldn't be done or that it would take too long. Then, the next day he'd come back with it coded or fixed, and quite often – better." As a result, the development of *Realms* ran relatively smoothly, despite some harsh cuts required for the film footage.

"An hour or so needed to be cut because of time, cost and memory restrictions. We had to keep the number of discs and therefore the costs down." With the game nearing completion, Paul became responsible for playtesting not only the puzzles and gameplay but also ensuring that the mood and feel was fittingly lugubrious. "By the end I was completing the game in two hours and 30 minutes," he laughs, "and I'd be delighted to know if anyone has beaten that!"

Despite a late change to its denouement, *Realms Of The Haunting* was released on time at the end of 1996 in the UK and early 1997 in the US. Reviews were positive; Gamespot awarded it 8.5 out of 10, praising the

> "The inspiration for Realms came from religion, both orthodox and unorthodox"

professional FMV sections and handy difficulty slider, whilst *PC Zone* bestowed *Realms* an impressive 93%, calling it "… an absorbing experience from start to finish." Long before the final scene of *Realms Of The Haunting* had been shot, Paul was already working on its sequel.

Unfortunately, disappointing sales saw this possibility fade. "That was sad for everyone that worked on *Realms*," he says gloomily, "especially as the critics loved it and that the people who actually did buy it loved it too." Yet, despite the less-than-stellar public interest, Paul still looks back very fondly on *Realms Of The Haunting*. "We all had a great time on the game. It belonged to all of us and everyone that worked on it was instrumental to its success. I feel honoured to have been part of that team."

» Gremlin released a *Limited Edition* version that included a behind-the-scenes documentary.





» [PC] What could it mean?



» [PC] What's the pentangle on the floor for?



Chapter 4 – Tales of…

Silent Hill 2

Silent Hill 2 is one of the most critically acclaimed horror games ever made, and is equally famous for having one of the best soundtracks in the industry. Steve Burns talks to famed composer Akira Yamaoka about his work on the game, his methods, and how easy it is to create insanity

David Lynch once said that sound was at least the equal of visuals in a movie, sometimes even more so. We wouldn't usually listen to the ramblings of a man who made *Dune*, but given his amazing body of work in psychological horror – and its huge influence on *Silent Hill* – we're going to let that one slide. That he's also absolutely correct doesn't hurt either.

Sound may seem the poor relation in the world of visuals-obsessed videogames – how many people have enormo-televisions but poor speakers? – but it can turn a good game into a great one. No-one knows this better than Akira Yamaoka: the Japanese composer's work on the *Silent Hill* series is legendary, particularly the second instalment, which is magnificently eerie and absolutely fearless (incest springs to mind…).

Like most of the games in the series, the protagonist is an everyman searching for a loved one amidst the peculiar fog and decaying otherworld of (the otherwise quaint) Silent Hill. Unlike some of the others, however, it doesn't focus on secret societies and cults: it's a personal story of grief, love, lust and loss, with a killer twist if you play it right.

Everyday stuff, then. The series is about understanding what gives ordinary people the fear, and Yamaoka knows exactly what 'that' is, and it's the normal becoming abnormal.

"In order to depict the emotion of feeling gross or fearful, it is most effective to use something disturbing in our daily lives," Yamaoka says. "I used certain sounds that we dislike instinctively without any reason or logical explanation, such as the scratching sound of scraping down a blackboard, the drilling sound of construction sites, and the braking sound of bikes. I've combined them to create these unsettling enigmatic sounds."

As James Sunderland – widower, Leon S Kennedy hairstyle copier and generally



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** TEAM SILENT
- » **RELEASED:** 2001
- » **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX
- » **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR



[Xbox 360] The side story *Born From A Wish* sees players taking on the role of Maria.

> "I USED CERTAIN SOUNDS THAT WE DISLIKE INSTINCTIVELY FOR NO REASON"


» [PS2] Oh hi, Cameron Diaz.


» [PS2] Remain calm.

MIND HOW YOU GO

One of the most interesting aspects of the *Silent Hill* series – and the second game in particular – is the way your actions influence the ending you receive. It means that, like the characters, you too are being judged in *Silent Hill*. Perform well and you might be redeemed, but go the other way and you might get something like the 'Maria' ending…



all-round nice bloke – heads into the town to try and find an explanation for why his dead wife would be writing him a letter, the fear begins to mushroom. The roads are out, the fog makes the Tyne look like the Seychelles, and there's the unpleasant matter of grotesque creatures haunting (and in some cases hunting) his every move.

What's truly unsettling, however, is the sense of familiar otherworldliness about the place: a world of easily identifiable objects and landmarks – streets, lakes, parks, rows of houses – rendered strange, if never really dangerous. In other, less pretentious terms: they're infused with the nameless dread. Yamaoka drew on Japanese culture to make the sound match the unnerving visuals.

"In order to create *Silent Hill 2*, I have used the Japanese style so it can be shown to the world. The style is not only talking about the Japanese inspiration, but I used the sense of what we call 'ma' that all Japanese people have. ["Ma" can be translated as "pause" or "space".] Most of the Japanese culture seen abroad, such as Kimono, Ukiyoe or Zen, is created by the sense of ma that we learn naturally, being born and raised in this culture without even consciously thinking about it. I created this soundtrack while keeping in mind the creation of originality, by utilising this subtle sense of ma in music."

Like the psychological horror movies it drew inspiration from (including Adrian Lyne's 1990 classic *Jacob's Ladder*), Yamaoka's work exploits players in a manner beyond fight or flight, beyond 'holycraprunawayit'saguywithachainsaw' reactions, by considering the intricate and subtle ways that your brain deals with sound.

"The wavelength of having fear, when you are watching a horror movie, riding a jet coaster, or walking in the haunted house, is actually the same wavelength you have when you are relaxed. People actually know that scary experience is not equal to a danger to their body. Of course, this excludes real accidents or being actually hit. Basically, the fear is received by the body and the brain actually knows that they are not in a danger. You might say that people know that it's okay because it's fictional. I believe the music that induces this state of 'fear=relax', and combined with the aforementioned "instinctively disturbing sounds" creates that weird unsettling feeling."

Yamaoka's soundtrack gives the game an edge that helps make it so memorable. Dialling into everything that was good (read: terrifying) about the environments and the enemies you face in them, his work succeeds in giving players the fear even when there's no imminent threat: try not to be reminded of Pyramid Head dragging the great knife when listening to some of the industrial pieces.

Like the game itself, the true strength of the soundtrack is its ability to skip effortlessly between moods. *Theme Of Laura* is a guitar-driven track that opens the game: a little eerie, sure, but nothing too crazy. The next track, *White Noiz*, is the total opposite: a shifting, jarring theme that feels like, as Sunderland says in the game, someone reaching into your skull.

> "In Silent Hill 2, I used the Japanese style to show it to the world"

And that's just how the game *starts*. Throughout, there is the same back and forth, an uneasy mix that sometimes finds itself on the same track (*Heaven's Night*, for example). Some songs are repeated in a totally different context: again, like the game's environments.

It's a shame then that no sequel that followed it really managed to recapture this mixture. Was that because it was a fluke, a one-off? Maybe Yamaoka decided he'd had enough, pulling this craziness out of his brain? According to the man himself, creating the sound wasn't nearly as hard as you would think.

"There wasn't anything difficult, but I just needed to achieve the concept I had set at the beginning, as described above. I needed to keep going through some trials and errors until I got it right." We'll just blame the games themselves, then.





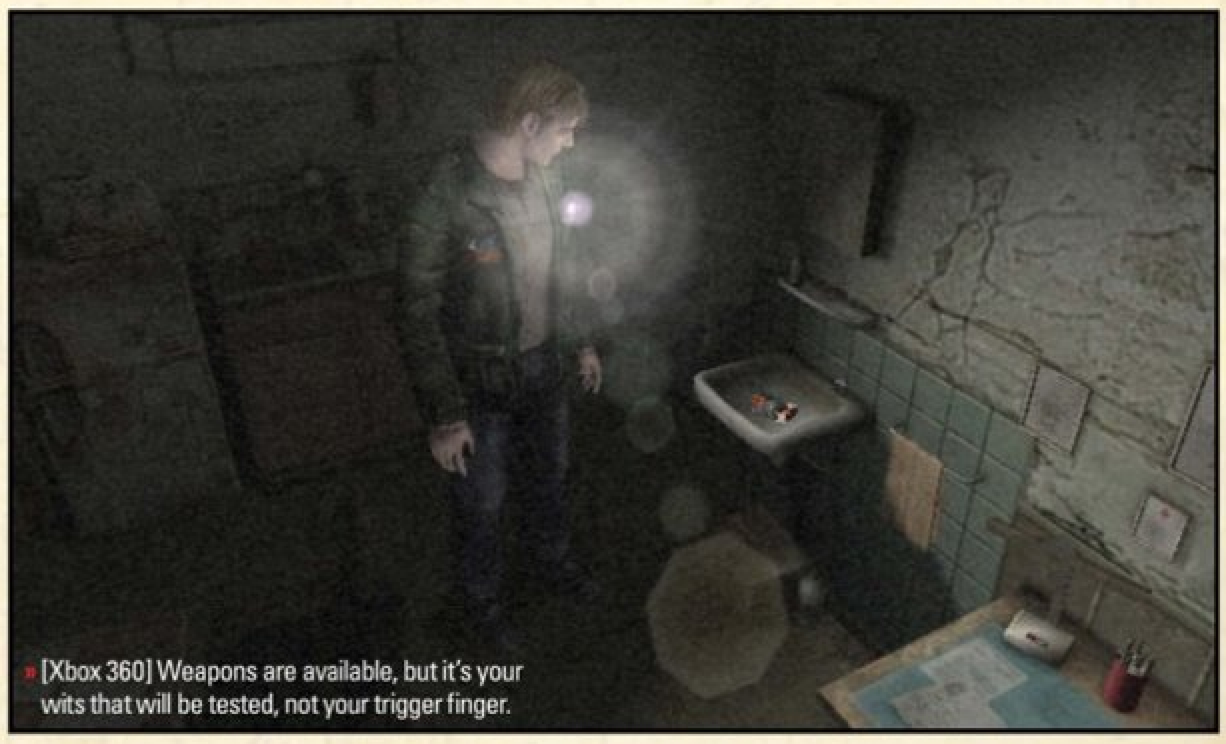

» [Xbox 360] Like most Silent Hill inhabitants, James is there because he's haunted by his past.

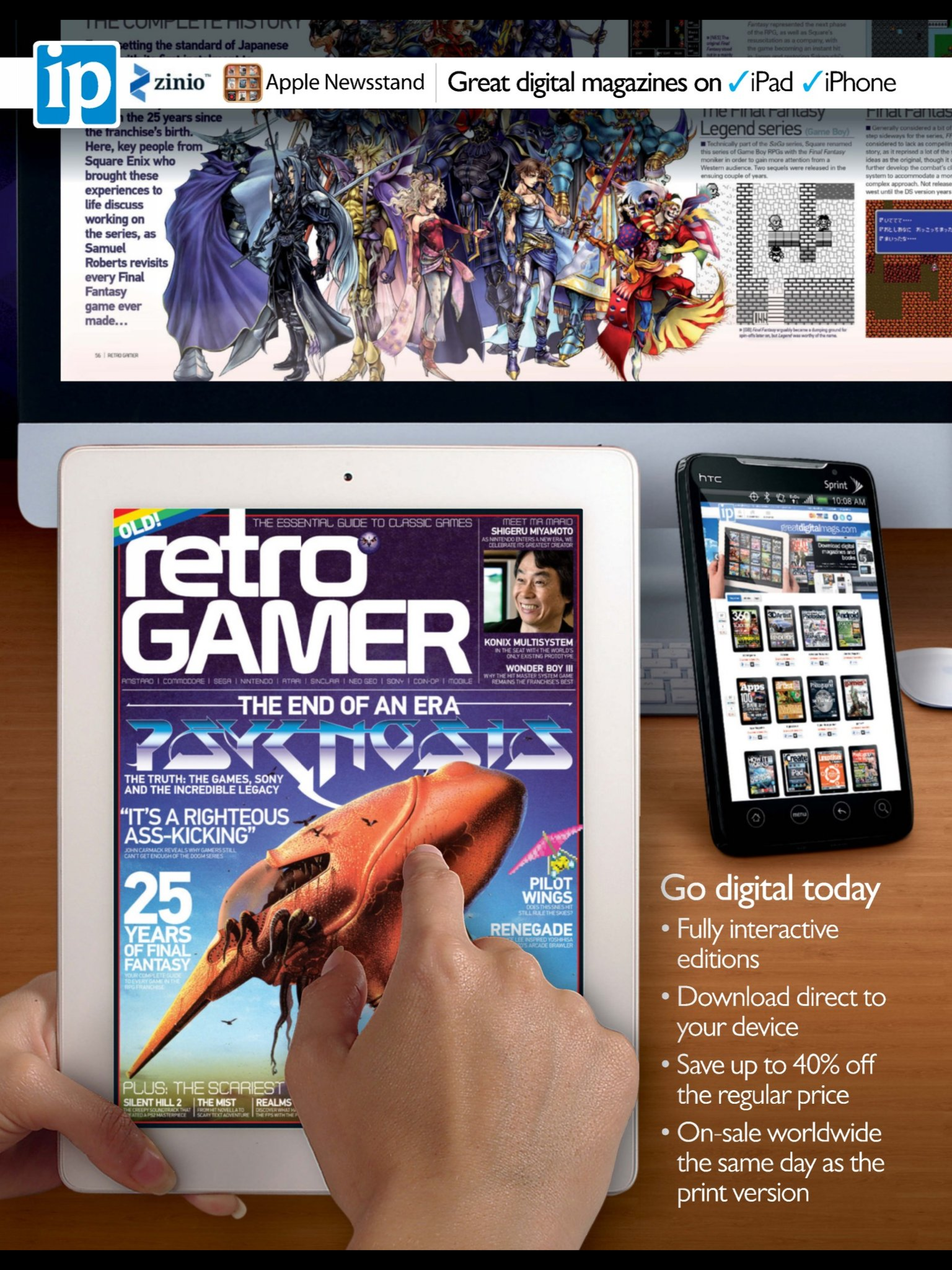
MOST HAUNTING

Silent Hill 2 is a game full of subtle horror, but occasionally it brings out the big guns. Hiding in a cupboard early in the game, main character James Sunderland witnesses his soon-to-be-nemesis Pyramid Head (his perceived punisher) raping two Mannequin creatures. Yes. Utterly terrifying because A) it's so violent, both visually and aurally, and B) it makes no sense at all: just straight up madness.

Well, it doesn't make any sense at *that* point. As the game rolls on though, and Sunderland's sexual repression comes to the fore, it becomes more disturbing. It was essential, however, to the character; when it was perceived as being cut in the recent HD remake there was outrage. Well done, *Silent Hill*. You've done it again.




» [Xbox 360] Weapons are available, but it's your wits that will be tested, not your trigger finger.



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FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Digital Integration

From humble beginnings on the ZX81, it produced one of the best-selling games of all time on the ZX Spectrum as well as a host of realistic simulations for the PC and 16-bit computers. So strap in tight as Graeme Mason has a peek inside the flight log of Digital Integration…

As Retro Gamer reclines in the study of Dave Marshall, former co-owner of Digital Integration, the tranquility of leafy suburbia is punctuated periodically by the thunder of jet engines roaring overhead. We are in Farnborough, home to the famous annual airshow and former base of the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE), an entirely appropriate location to chat with one of the founders of the distinguished software house. Because if you know anything at all about Digital Integration, you'll know of its reputation for producing realistic and entertaining flight simulations; consequently, Dave Marshall's background prior to starting up the software house should come as no surprise.

"I was at Boscombe Down in their A-squadron performance test division as a student engineer," begins Dave. "And while there I did a medical course to qualify for aircrew as they were always testing a new range of military aircraft." Thanks to friends in the various test sections, Dave would arrange air experience flights on a variety of aircraft such as the Jet Provost, Hercules and Sea King before he began as an engineer at RAE Farnborough in the flight systems department. In 1976, he moved to RAE Bedford.

"My first project at Bedford was designing what we called the first digital feel system in the country," says Dave, "which was to replace the old system that relied on springs and dashpots to give feel to the control column. The system I designed had three hydraulic jacks which were driven by a mini-computer."

The benefit was clear: the computer could be modelled with the characteristics of any particular aircraft, saving a huge amount of time and effort in designing individual simulators.

The First Game

While at Bedford, Dave began to write his own flight simulation in his spare time. When he was transferred back to Farnborough in 1979 to work on a new standard flight systems computer for the USAF, it coincided with the dawn of a new era in home computing – specifically the Sinclair ZX81. "I remember thinking, wouldn't it be great to get a flight simulator on this micro? So, using my experience from Bedford, I started writing a simulation on the ZX81."

The resulting game, *Fighter Pilot*, was rudimentary in appearance yet beneath its simple display lay some impressive mechanics that realistically mimicked the flight and controls of an F-15 Eagle. In conjunction with fellow RAE Farnborough systems engineer Rod Swift, a follow-up to *Fighter Pilot* was soon in the works. "Rod was very much into hardware design, which I knew nothing of," explains Dave, "while I was more software-orientated. He give me hints and help on hardware design, with

INSTANT EXPERT

The name Digital Integration came from the combination of hardware and software as shown by the ZX81 high-res graphics add-on for *Night Gunner*

Eventually the name was shortened to DI. "We realised Digital Integration was a bit too tricky to say after a few glasses of wine," smiles Dave Marshall

***Fighter Pilot* appeared** on many compilations including US Gold's famous *They Sold A Million*

The Heinkel that appeared on the cover of *Night Gunner* featured triangles instead of Swastikas in order to avoid distribution problems in Germany

Chopper sim *Tomahawk* was originally entitled *Thunderbird* until DI's legal advisors suggested it should be changed. Early adverts from 1984 show the original name

DI never moved from its original premises at the Watchmoor Trade Centre in Camberley, Surrey; it expanded by purchasing neighbouring units

Rod Swift's Tornado cockpit was made from solid wood and required eight people to lift. "I should have told Rod that fibre-glass was the future!" jokes Kevin Bezant

DI were bought by Titus in 1998, who folded itself in 2005



AIRSTRIKE USA



“I remember thinking, wouldn’t it be great to get a flight simulator on this… ”
DAVE MARSHALL ON DISCOVERING THE ZX81

me giving him tips on programming. That’s when Rod began to learn to program.”
As Dave continued to develop his second ZX81 game, *Night Gunner,* Rod Swift designed a 16k ram-pack for the micro-computer, making the game one of the first all-assembler software products for the machine.

With *Night Gunner* on the market, Dave desperately wished for a home computer that offered the improvement in processing power and graphical display that would do his complex computations justice.

In April 1982, Clive Sinclair answered his wish. “The ZX Spectrum, that was a huge leap,” says Dave excitedly. “At RAE Bedford I learned how to calculate the full 3D perspective of a runway and at last we could put that into a graphical display.” For Dave, with his background and degree in aeronautical systems engineering, it was the chance to create an accurate simulation for the mass market.

“I was up on all aspects of aircraft stability and control and covered partial differential equations for aircraft behaviour in my degree,” he continues, “so I was able to program approximate versions of these into the Spectrum.”

With Dave busy on the Spectrum version of *Fighter Pilot* and Rod Swift updating *Night Gunner* for the same computer, designing and writing games was occupying the majority of their spare time. “We went to several early Micro fairs with the ZX81 games and Spectrum versions of *Fighter Pilot* and *Night Gunner,*” says Dave, “and that was when DI took off. I remember a distributor called Microdealer coming up to us and ordering 500 copies of each game. We thought he meant 500 a month, but he said “No, 500 a week! And don’t stop until we tell you!””

Six Months

Dave and Rod were still working at RAE Farnborough by day and using Rod’s home address as a base for Digital Integration. “Basically, our nine to five jobs became an eight-hour interruption to the software side,” laughs Dave. “I would cycle home at lunchtime and get on the phone because WHSmiths wanted an order for 5000 *Night Gunners*. It was absolutely phenomenal, and we simply couldn’t keep up with it. They loved the quality of our products.” Consequently, Dave and Rod made a decision: they would give Digital Integration six months to see if it could work full time, and packed in their jobs at the RAE. Shortly afterwards, they discovered a small unit at the nearby Watchmoor Trade Centre and persuaded an assistant from the RAE to join them as secretary. The gamble paid off.

In 1984, the Spectrum version of *Night Gunner* and *Fighter Pilot* continued to sell well and Digital Integration was under considerable pressure to convert the latter to the Commodore 64. “Microdealer was screaming out for *Fighter Pilot* on the 64,” says Dave, “but neither Rod or I could program in 6800 as we were both Z80 based. So we recruited our first outside programmer, a guy named Darrell Dennies.” The C64 version of *Fighter Pilot* also proved very popular and Dennies would go on to convert a number of games for DI. ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

1 instruction page for *Fighter Pilot* on the ZX81

12 famous race tracks in *TT Racer*

500 copies of Fighter Pilot a week demanded by Microdealer early in 1983

Action **16** – One of DI’s label that specialised in re-releasing third party and older DI games

86.875 was the average score for Digital Integration’s games in *Crash Magazine*

90% score for *Hind* in *PC Gamer* magazine

332: Pages in the manual for *Tornado*

15,000: square miles of flying area in *Fighter Pilot,* unprecedented in 1983



» At a ZX Microfair. Rod Swift stands between his brother Tim and a friend of Dave Marshall's, co-opted to help at the show.



TIMELINE

1982 DIGITAL INTEGRATION IS FORMED BY DAVE MARSHALL AND ROD SWIFT. IT PUBLISHES *NIGHT GUNNER* AND *FIGHTER PILOT* ON THE SINCLAIR ZX81, BOTH PROGRAMMED BY DAVE MARSHALL

1983 SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED VERSIONS OF *FIGHTER PILOT* AND *NIGHT GUNNER* APPEAR ON THE ZX SPECTRUM WITH THE LATTER NOW WRITTEN BY ROD SWIFT

> "The development team got bigger with each project as the complexity increased"
> DAVE MARSHALL

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Dave Marshall (above)
"When I left DI, I never wanted to see another flight sim as long as I lived," reveals Dave. Instead he took an interest in trading stocks before eventually spreading the love of his favourite instrument, the banjo, and teaching to a class of over 30 students. After having had one of his kidneys removed in 2011 following the discovery of an 8.5cm cancerous tumour, Dave is now semi-retired, although his love of flight simulations has recently been rekindled thanks to Laminar Research's *X-Plane*.

Rob Cobain
Like Dave Marshall and Rod Swift, Rod was unable to continue for long at DI after the Titus takeover. Rod remains in the industry: today he works at high-performance bespoke software house Igence.



Robin Heydon (above)
Upon leaving DI, Robin moved to California, working for a number of companies, including DI's great rival, Microprose. After ten years in the computer entertainment field, he moved into internet-based testing and today works in Bluetooth wireless technology as a specification writer.

Rod Swift
After DI was bought out by Titus, Rod remained there another year before finally leaving DI sometime in 1999. Since then he has been involved in further software development and more recently website design. We were sadly unable to track down Rod in time for this article.



Kevin Bezant (above)
Along with fellow DI employees Matt Smith, Todd Gibbs and Dave Proctor, Kevin formed the development team Razorworks in 1996. He left there in 2008 to join Rebellion.

Meanwhile, Dave and Rod spent 1984 planning and writing the follow-up to *Fighter Pilot*. Keen to build on the success of the action flight sim, they opted for something slightly different as Dave explains. "I still had contacts at RAE Bedford who could give me assistance in terms of helicopter dynamics, handling characteristics and so on, and I'd done a fair amount of flying in helicopters myself at Boscombe Down." At the time, the Apache (from Hughes Helicopters) was the most exciting and well known aircraft and so became a natural focus for DI's next game. With a level of openness and co-operation that seems incredible today, Dave contacted Hughes, requesting a wealth of technical data, and the manufacturer was remarkably forthcoming. "Hughes sent us a ton of material, including video that it'd produced demonstrating the chopper's handling. It was incredible."

Even with Dennies working on the C64 version of *Fighter Pilot*, the issues of working on complex and realistic simulations became obvious to Dave and Rod. "The main problem with flight sims was that they took too long," bemoans Dave, "and there was only one of us who did the research, design and programming." Add in graphics, sound and modelling and it was clear each game would require a lengthy gestation period – too long if Digital Integration was to survive for any major length of time. The level of detail involved would never permit a quick turnaround.

Tomahawk Arrives

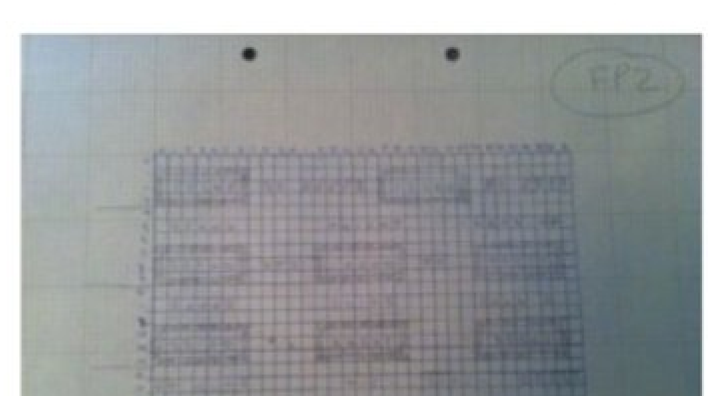
With Mervyn Estcourt's *Speed King* helping Digital Integration through this awkward period, finally in the winter of 1985, Apache helicopter simulator *Tomahawk* was ready to take off. The simulation was an instant success and garnered a Crash Smash as well as glowing reviews in many other magazines. DI's patience and attention to detail was paying off, as was its playtesting.

"We wanted to make sure that we could claim all our games had realistic handling," says Dave, "despite being restricted to either a keyboard or a simple joystick. So although it was never possible to have every control of a helicopter, we were convinced that we should never lose sight of the fact it was entertainment. No matter what accurate specs or modelling we had in the game, it could not be too frustrating and it had to be fun. It was a fine line." *Tomahawk* was a bestseller, despite DI's slight faux pas with its name. "Why we didn't call it *Apache* I'll never know," grimaces Dave, "but we ended up thinking about the weapon used by the North American Indians instead, using that as the connection to the Apache."

Joining DI around this time was Rod Cobain, whose role was a mix of operations, sales and account management. "I knew I was working for a software house out of the ordinary," says Rod, "as its flight



» Dave Marshall shakes hands with an RAE Bedford rep for a *Tornado* publicity shot.



» [ZX81] Dave's original handwritten layout for the original ZX81 version of *Fighter Pilot*.

1984 – DARRELL DENNIES JOINS DI AND BECOMES ITS FIRST HIRED PROGRAMMER; HE BEGINS WITH THE C64 VERSION OF *FIGHTER PILOT*. MEANTIME DAVE AND ROD BUSY AWAY ON *FIGHTER PILOT* FOLLOW-UP, *TOMAHAWK*

1987 – DI BEGAN HIRING EXTRA PROGRAMMERS, INCLUDING KEVIN BEZANT, IN ORDER TO DEVELOP BIGGER GAMES FOR THE 16-BIT COMPUTERS. DEVELOPMENT FOR DI'S FIRST 16-BIT GAME, *F/16 COMBAT PILOT* BEGINS

1991 – AFTER A GAP OF THREE YEARS, DI RELEASES ITS FINAL 8-BIT GAMES: *F/16 COMBAT PILOT* AND THE DAVE PERRY/NICK BRUTY SHOOTER *EXTREME*

1993 – AFTER A THREE-YEAR DEVELOPMENT, *TORNADO* IS FINALLY RELEASED ONTO THE AMIGA, ATARI ST AND PC

1996 – THE YEAR OF HELICOPTER SIM *APACHE*, WITH INTERACTIVE MAGIC LICENSING THE GAME FOR RELEASE IN THE US. IT'S A HUGE SUCCESS

1998 – FRENCH PUBLISHER TITUS MAKE AN OFFER TO DAVE MARSHALL AND ROD SWIFT FOR DI WHICH THEY ACCEPT, ENDING 16 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLISHING

2005 – TITUS REPORTED BANKRUPT. VARIOUS MEMBERS OF DIGITAL INTEGRATION HAVE RELATIVELY MIXED REACTIONS.

2012 – MICROPROSE CO-FOUNDER JW "WILD BILL" STEALEY RELEASES DI'S *APACHE LONGBOW* ON HIS IENTERTAINMENT NETWORK. MORE OF DI'S GAMES ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT WWW.GOG.COM

simulations on the 8-bit machines were already standing out against the arcade market. The passion of Dave and Rod to deliver as much realism as possible was amazing, especially given the restrictions of the technology." Rod Cobain would soon have a key role to play, but in the meantime Rod Swift was working on a different type of simulation – and an unusual licence. "Rod was very keen on motorbikes and in fact rode a bike to and from work every day," says Dave, "so he was understandably keen to do a 3D racing simulation."

Rod Swift's attention to detail mirrored that of Dave Marshall's flight simulations, producing another bestseller in 1986, backed by a tie-in with Team Suzuki. "It was a promotional idea that we came up with," remembers Dave, "and we had a launch day at Silverstone, which was great fun, and we met up with the team and all the Suzuki riders." However, even though *TT Racer* was a success, Dave Marshall was already eyeing up the fast-incoming 16-bit computers as a more suitable home for his processor-hungry flight sims.

New Blood

However, we remain with the 8-bits for the moment, and 1987 saw new programmers climb on board including ex-electronic technician Kevin Bezant. "I'd been working at Thorn EMI in one of its weapons divisions," recalls Kevin, "and had learnt there how to program. I'd already had a game published on the ZX81 called *Lunar Rescue* and a number of games for the Spectrum too."

Kevin began work at Digital Integration in May 1987. "I was both impressed and intimidated by the 3D games that DI were producing – mainly because my coding experience to date had involved creating 2D sprite games. The 3D games involved a fair bit of maths, which wasn't my strong point!" laughs Kevin, who worked on disk copyright protection before moving to games such as *Bobsleigh* and *ATF*.

It would not be long before he found himself involved in DI's first 16-bit project, which marked a notable change in game development as Dave Marshall describes. "Keeping up with improving technology and products was getting more difficult and complex so the teams involved got bigger and bigger. We had to hire more coders and ancillary staff to keep pace." Nonetheless, DI's attention to detail remained undimmed. "We had the Farnborough Airshow that year," recalls Dave, "and I just walked up to the General Dynamics tent, gave them my business card and asked to speak to the F/16 test pilot." Dave proceed to quiz him about all manner of information not in the public domain – "There's nothing pilots like more than to talk about their aeroplanes," notes Dave – before security intervened and escorted the DI boss out of the tent. Despite this encounter, General Dynamics offered considerable support for the development of *F/16* and the simulation was incredibly well received on practically every format it was released on.

However, the gap between tent-pole games and the increasing size of the DI staff had begun to worry Dave and Rod, especially as their next game was to be the biggest yet. "The development team got bigger with each project as the complexity increased but you never saw a reduction in development time. The average flight sim took between 18 months and two years to develop, whether it was on the ZX Spectrum or PC," recalls Dave. The scenario could not be allowed to continue, and fortunately they had a solution.

Branching Out

"We needed to branch out beyond flight sims and do products that had a shorter development time," notes Dave, "and Rod Cobain came up with the idea of another label called Action 16." Thanks to his previous work in the duplication industry, Rod had an excellent range of contacts:

"He knew all the software houses and had a rapport with them that enabled him to source decent products," says Dave. In particular, Rod had a good relationship with several French-based publishers such as Ubisoft and Loriciels, which enabled DI to re-release several popular games including the comical US Civil War sim, *North & South*. "I remember signing the deal on that game and cracking open the champagne. It was by far the best-selling game on Action 16," smiles Dave. Selling other companies' back catalogues provided DI with valuable new revenue that could sustain it between its own big releases. Eventually the success of Action 16 led to another label for the publication of original third-party software: Dream Factory. However, Dream Factory did not prove as successful, despite intriguing titles such as *Supaplex*.

That next big project was *Tornado*, based on the European-built jet fighter made famous in the recent Iraq war. It was an obvious choice for the next simulation. "That's true," agrees Dave, "but it was also because there was a good chance that we could get support from the RAF and British Aerospace who built the aircraft." This assistance remained essential if DI were to maintain its pedigree of highly accurate simulations. Working on the *Tornado* project was Kevin Bezant. "*Tornado* was the 'biggie' in terms of development," he says, ▶



» These two lucky lads won a trip in Noel Edmonds' helicopter thanks to their proficiency in *Tomahawk*.

LENSLOKED



Like most software publishers, DI was always concerned about piracy. As it was producing games for the higher end of the market and was hardly the most prolific of publishers, it was an exceptional worry for Dave and Rod. "I remember this company had a product called Lenslok," shudders Dave, "and we thought we should try it. It only cost about 4 or 5p per unit, but it seemed to be that or have your game pirated." Of course, there was a considerable downside to the infamous copy protection system as Dave recalls. "We got a lot of grief over it and we lost a lot of time to customer support. But we felt we didn't have a choice."



» [C64] Well-reviewed but not a great seller: *ATF*.

SIX OF THE BEST



Fighter Pilot
Re-released countless times, and possibly the only game from US Gold's *They Sold A Million* compilations that actually did. A huge step up, Dave Marshall created a combination of accurate flight mechanics and thrilling gameplay in *Fighter Pilot*.



Night Gunner
Digital Integration wanted an arcade-style game to release alongside *Fighter Pilot* and Rod Swift produced the goods with this brilliant wartime shooter. Offering two similar stages set over 30 missions, *Night Gunner* wasn't complex, but very playable.



Tomahawk
After *Fighter Pilot*, Dave Marshall turned to helicopter simulation and produced the amazing *Tomahawk*. At a time when most games were being turned around within four to six months, its elongated development was well-used.



F/16 Combat Pilot
F/16 had been a decent hit for DI on the Amiga and Atari ST before it ported the game back onto the 8-bits, albeit with greatly reduced options and missions. The programmers did a remarkable job squeezing the game down for the C64.



Tornado
F/16 laid the foundations; *Tornado* took the development to the next stage with formation flying, improved graphics and greater mission variety. DI's attention to detail and Rod Swift's promotional simulator helped *Tornado*'s success.

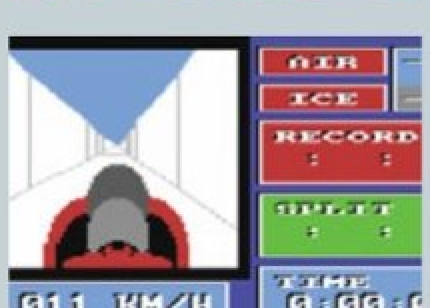


Hind
Like *Tornado*, *Hind* took the good work of a previous game (in this case *Apache*) and improved upon it. Utilising the same engine, DI even pioneered multi-game multiplayer as players scrapped over a virtual battlefield.

THREE TO AVOID



Taxi!
Maybe we're being a little harsh considering when it was released, but this early third-party effort compared badly to Rod and Dave's own games and was a poor seller. It wasn't a particularly attractive game, and one best relegated to the past.



Bobsleigh
The Spectrum version managed to adeptly reproduce the thrill of the high-speed winter sport; something was lost in translation, however, as the Commodore 64 *Bobsleigh* ended up with a fraction of its playability, which was a crying shame.



Top Gun: Combat Zones
With Dave Marshall departed, practically all semblance of serious simulation had disappeared, and while technically impressive, *Combat Zones* lacked the depth and accuracy of simulation for which DI had become famous. A sad departure from form for the company.

"and it took three years to produce after originating as a single page design from Dave Marshall." Dave himself managed the project and developed the flight model, as well as liaising with the RAF and British Aerospace. A small, yet dedicated team was assembled by DI to bring together all the elements of the game: Nick Mascall was responsible for all the 3D models, Matt Smith created the artwork, Tony Hosier programmed the Amiga version while Robin Heydon – who had already impressed Dave and Rod with his work converting the Amiga *Boulderdash* clone *Supaplex* to the PC – designed the UI elements.

"We had a lot of help from RAF Honington on *Tornado*," reveals Dave, "and we went there several times to spend the day with their aircrews." Kevin Bezant recalls these trips fondly. "I remember being invited up to the base in Suffolk where they had a real Tornado flight simulator; it was an inspiring day and we came away with some great photographic material which we incorporated into the game's front end." Kevin is adamant the relaxed manner in which the game was developed was key in its success. "I don't ever recall a deadline being imposed and in retrospect, we were given licence to make the game perfect." Not that it was easy, concludes Kevin: "There was a sense of purpose within the team to get the job done. During the last months of the project, the entire team were working some extremely long days."

Promoting Tornado

With *Tornado* nearing completion, Dave Marshall jetted off to the States to try and find a distributor for the game. Interestingly, DI's great competitor, Spectrum Holobyte were interested. "I went over to San Francisco to demonstrate *Tornado* to the Spectrum Holobyte guys, and I showed them the mission planning and then the game with six Tornados flying in formation before splitting up and co-ordinating an attack. They were gobsmacked," says Dave, proudly.

DI were also keen to make sure *Tornado* was well-promoted, and Rod Swift had a big role to play here as Dave describes. "Rod built a full-size Tornado cockpit which he had scaled up from an Airfix model; we had this model and a mock-up ejector seat, mounted a PC onto it and put it on castors. Then we'd wheel it onto a trailer and take it to various exhibitions and shows to demonstrate the game." One of the shows the DI cockpit was taken to was the 1993 Airshow at RAF Fairford. "There was a Tornado there and its aircrew came into our tent. I remember them sitting in our cockpit and playing with the bomb aiming, while exclaiming 'How the hell did you get all this information?!'" chuckles Dave.

After *Tornado*, in a move that echoed the early days of *Fighter Pilot* and *Tomahawk*, DI moved to helicopters with the popular *Apache Longbow*, which in name made up for Dave's admitted oversight with

"This guy turned up completely out of the blue, saying he represented Titus"

DAVE MARSHALL ON DI'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE FRENCH PUBLISHER


» [Atari ST] Digital Integration's 16-bit flight sims were worth the lengthy waits.


» A prestigious Crash Reader's award for the Spectrum version of *Fighter Pilot*.





» [Atari ST] Deadly chickens in the Action 16 re-release of Coktel Visions' *Gobliins 2*.



» [Amstrad] The start of the Italian course Breuil-Cervinia in *Bobsleigh*.

Tomahawk ten years previously. Yet, together with an update of its earlier F/16 sim (*F/16 Fighting Falcon*) and another highly-regarded helicopter sim, *Hind*, pressure from bigger rivals and an increasingly crowded market was beginning to take its toll on DI.

"We'd had interest from Interactive Magic to form some deal in 1996," remembers Dave, "but we just didn't think the time was right. *Apache* had just been released and was doing decent business." Two years later, and with sales of games such as *Hind* proving disappointing, French publisher Titus declared an interest in purchasing DI. "This guy turned up completely out of the blue, saying he represented them. We were a few months away from launching *F-18*, so in a difficult period – and he gave us a take-it-or-leave it offer." After a brief discussion, Dave and Rod accepted and DI became a subsidiary of Titus. "It was tough to survive with a large team and our specialist type of product," frowns Dave, "so we felt we didn't really have a choice." The reasons for Titus seemed obvious: it had no PC games background to speak of while DI had plenty of experience on the machine. "What we wanted to do in terms of 3D onscreen technology and displaying the 3D perspective, was not possible on formats such as the PlayStation," says Dave, "and with computer technology improving at an incredible rate and our product aimed more at the serious, maturer end of the market, we were solely focused on the PC. Titus must have wanted a slice of that."

Titus Woes

Unfortunately, Dave did not remain at the new Titus-owned DI for long. "With *F-18*, I was only involved with mission testing, but as the project was nearing conclusion, I was busy doing this every day." Dave had a big family holiday booked around the time of its release and DI's new owners were unhappy, insisting Dave cancel the holiday and oversee the release of the new simulation. Discussions took place and an agreement was not reached; when Dave returned to the Watchmoor Trade Centre after his holiday, it was clear he had no further role at DI. "The funny thing was my eldest son was working at DI as a tester. So I'd run him there every day, drop him off then come home!"

Dave Marshall has mixed feelings on the abrupt end to his career at DI. "We were used to doing things our way and Titus' style was different to that. It was disappointing as I'd obviously been running it for many years with Rod; but in other respects I was glad to be out." Rod Cobain is a little sharper when it comes to the French company. "Dave and Rod built a company based on realism and quality. I believe Titus made a fundamental mistake by thinking you could put out any product through the label and expect it to sell."

Rod Swift remained at DI for a short while before also leaving. The company was technically still in existence up until the end of Titus in 2005, yet it was a pale shadow of its former self. Despite this unfortunate end to the story of Digital Integration, Dave still has fond memories of his time at the helm of the software house, especially during the Eighties.

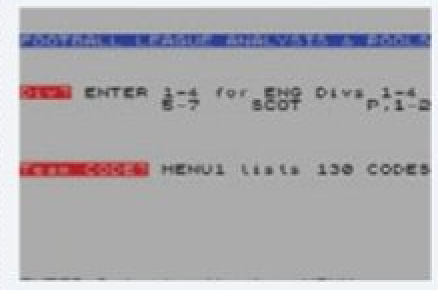
"It was fun because the company was small, the industry was new and we were all learning. We were also proud of the fact that we developed and published our own product. They were exciting times." Looking back on his career since, Rod Cobain agrees. "The talent and ethos at DI provided a benchmark for all my future views of software publishing. I owe the guys there a huge vote of thanks – DI was the best games company I ever worked for."

Special thanks to Dave Marshall, Rod Cobain, Kevin Bezant and Robin Heydon for their time and Andrew Fisher and Ant Harper of Retrogear UK for images.



» Dave Marshall sits at his desk circa 1988.

EARLY GAMES



Like many early Eighties software houses, Digital Integration was often approached by people offering their latest games. As programmers themselves, Dave and Rod concentrated mainly on their own games but nevertheless published a brace of early titles from third parties. *Taxi!* was a simple arcade game that sold very few copies, while *Football League Analysis* was a Pools prediction program written by Dave Marshall's father-in-law. "He was a scientist at the RAE but his passion in life was football," says Dave, "and being a mathematician by training, when the Spectrum came out he taught himself how to program so that he could write something that would predict football results on the basis of form." Unfortunately, it sold even less than *Taxi!*. "You had to put in so much data by hand it became a bit laborious and I think we ended up selling 50 copies or something!" laughs Dave.



» An early Spectrum advert with *Tomahawk* and *TT Racer* still sporting their original names.

THE KING OF SPEED



The story of how the Commodore 64 version of *Full Throttle* came about is an odd one. "Mervyn [Estcourt] wrote the game and offered it to us," said Neil Hooper of Micromega in an interview from **Retro Gamer** 81, "and we actually declined, partly because it was getting expensive to distribute games, and partly because Mervyn was becoming a bit of a superstar and we felt the advance we were going to have to offer him would have been more than we would have got back." Micromega was aware that it had credibility in the Spectrum market – but not the C64 – so also fretted over whether the game would sell at all for it. Estcourt subsequently approached Digital Integration who released the game for the C64 under the new name of *Speed King* in order to avoid any issues with Micromega. Strangely, another ex-Micromega programmer, Derek Brewster wrote *Speed King 2* for the Spectrum which was published by budget label Mastertronic, before Brewster's own label Zeppelin published an official sequel, *Full Throttle 2*, in 1990.



Sega's *Wonder Boy* series has gone through numerous changes since it was first released in 1986. Its finest moment is arguably the brilliantly received *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*, which took the exploration and RPG elements that had first appeared in *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*, and married them to an excellent *Metroidvania* template. Darran Jones revisits Westone's hit Master System game to find out if it's still the superb arcade adventure it was when he first played it back in 1989.

1 *Hu-Man*
This is Wonderboy's original form, as he appears at the beginning of the game. Unfortunately, it's not long before he's changed into a green fire-breathing dragon.

2 *Mouseman*
Mouseman is small, which makes it easy for him to avoid enemies. He also has the rather handy ability to cling to chequered walls, allowing him to reach areas other characters can't.

3 *Lizardman*
This is the form you first turn into after being struck by the Mecha Dragon's trap. Fortunately you're far from defenceless, as you have the ability to breathe fire. Very handy.

4 *Lionman*
Not to be confused with *Thundercats*' Lion-O, this meaty-looking fella boasts an overhead swing that allows him to hit anything above his head. Very useful when seeking out secrets.

5 *Piranhaman*
The ability to swim is Piranhaman's biggest asset. This makes it easy to negotiate the large areas of water found throughout the game world, and avoid the many aquatic enemies.

6 *Hawkman*
Hawkman is extremely powerful, as he has the power of flight. This allows him to avoid all sorts of danger, but makes him especially susceptible to the game's few high-flying enemies.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Balanced Perfection

There's an epic scope to *Wonder Boy's* third Master System adventure that few other games on the system were ever able to match. While it borrowed heavily from the gameplay mechanics first introduced in Westone's arcade game *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*, the developer continued to polish both the gameplay elements and the engine itself, until its game evolved into one of the Master System's true classics. Brilliantly paced and with a large number of hidden secrets to uncover, it remains a wonderful arcade platformer and is easily one of the best games in the franchise.

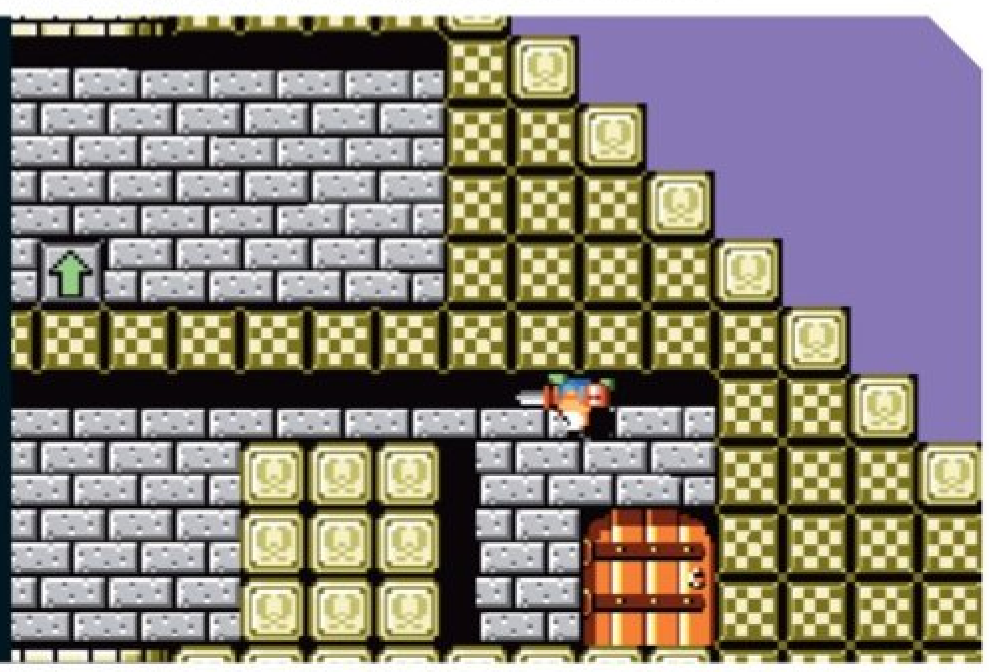
BEST WEAPON



Straight As An Arrow

No matter what form Wonder Boy uses in *The Dragon's Trap*, he's rarely defenceless. His dragon form has the ability to spit flame, while all his animal forms are handy with a sword. There are additional items that Wonder Boy has access to, and you'll need to use all of them if you ever want to break that dragon's curse. Many of them are magic-based, including simple fireballs and whirlwinds that will devastate anything that get in their way. Our favourite however is the bow and arrow, which immediately fires upwards; highly useful as it's the one area that Wonder Boy can't actually defend against.

BEST CHARACTER



Enter Mighty Mouse

It's hard to choose a single character in *The Dragon's Trap*, because they're all so useful at various stages of the game. If we did have to pick just one though, we would most likely plump for Mouseman. In addition to looking cute, he's also versatile, with his ability to cling to certain types of walls, allowing him to get into all sorts of little nooks and crannies. His small size also makes it a lot easier for him to avoid certain enemy attacks, while also being surprisingly nippy, allowing him to quickly run through the more emptier sections of the large game world.

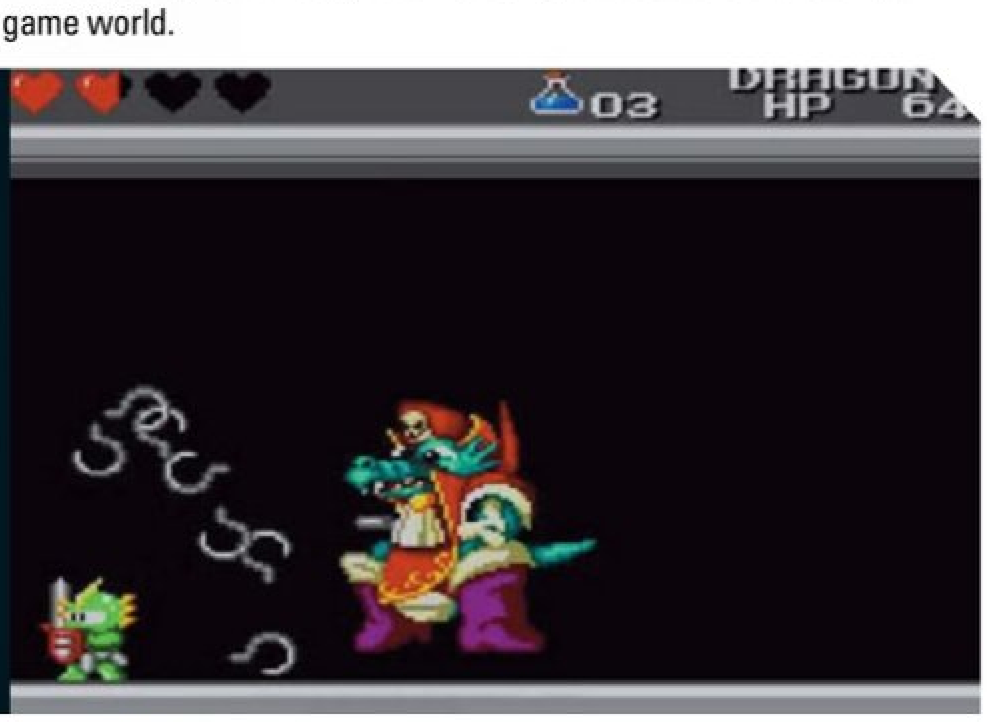
BEST LEVEL



Time For A Swim

One of the strengths of *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* is that it's essentially a large open world that slowly opens up as you gain access to newer animal forms. While there are no individual levels in the traditional gaming sense, much of *Wonder Boy III* is nevertheless broken up into distinctive areas, ensuring plenty of variety as you attempt to shake the curse placed on you by the dying Mecha Dragon. The best sections for us are the excellent underwater levels that can be found in various sections of Monster Land. They're tough to navigate, but filled with cheerful music and plenty of detail.

BEST BOSS



Pirates Rule

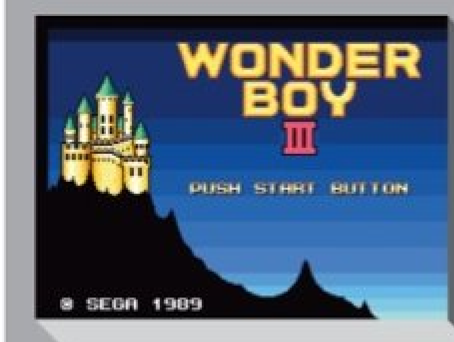
Everybody knows that pirates are amazing. With this important statement declared it should become obvious that our favourite boss in *The Dragon's Trap* is the giant pirate dragon encountered when you play as Piranhaman. Hiding in a ship with the same size dimension issues as *Doctor Who*'s Tardis, you have to traverse some incredibly challenging corridors before you encounter the mighty adversary in his underwater lair. He's an easy boss to beat, requiring you to do little more than block his one attack which consists of throwing a bunch of hooks at you, but you can't deny he's one snappy dresser.

STRANGEST VERSION



Comic Book Heroes

In addition to the Master System offering, there are three variants of *The Dragon's Trap*. A PC version appeared in 1991, with slightly enhanced visuals and better music, and was known as *Adventure Island* in Japan and *Dragon's Curse* in the US. There's also a Game Gear version, which was released in 1992 and was essentially the same as the Master System game with redesigned levels for the system's smaller screen. For true oddness, though, check out Tec Toy's offering based on the popular Brazilian comic *Turma Da Monica*, which keeps the level design and music, but replaces all the characters with heroes from the comic.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** MASTER SYSTEM
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** WESTONE
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

What the press said… ages ago

MEAN MACHINES
95%

"This has to rank as one of the greatest Master System games ever! It has a look and feel slightly reminiscent of the Nintendo *Mario* series (no bad thing) and a depth of gameplay second to none. All in all, a very slick Sega product with universal appeal. Make sure it's in your collection now."



What we think

Wonder Boy III is certainly a lot tougher than we remember it to be, but there's no denying that it's an exceptionally well designed game, with smart, *Metroid*-like elements that still hold up today.

FINAL FANTASY

THE COMPLETE HISTORY

From setting the standard of Japanese RPGs with its first instalment to rewriting the rules of the genre with its seventh chapter, Final Fantasy has continually reinvented itself in the 25 years since the franchise's birth. Here, key people from Square Enix who brought these experiences to life discuss working on the series, as Samuel Roberts revisits every Final Fantasy game ever made…



1987 (Japan)
Final Fantasy (NES)

■ Everyone's heard the story. The original *Final Fantasy* was creator Hironobu Sakaguchi's then-final attempt to produce a hit game, with his previous titles having struggled for Square – if it failed, he'd quit the games industry and try something else. Such a title would eventually become ironic, but Sakaguchi's choice of title has always been a philosophical matter: he approaches each game as if it could be his last, encouraging his team to incorporate every possible idea rather than saving them for future instalments.

Subsequent games *Lost Odyssey* and *The Last Story* are examples of this same mentality, and you can see that particular design direction in *Final Fantasy*, with its previously unseen mixture of sci-fi and fantasy genres. It built somewhat on Enix's *Dragon Quest* in basic combat mechanics, but was also bolstered by a largely open world map and relatively freeform class system. Fundamental to the first *Final Fantasy* was the evolution of the way you interacted with the environment – players went from slowly moving through the world on foot to getting land vehicles, and, later, airships, which would become a fun trademark of the series as they offered full, instant exploration of the world.

This relationship with the environment is one of the greatest immersive triumphs within the *Final Fantasy* series, and this first instalment pioneered this idea. *Final Fantasy* represented the next phase of the RPG, as well as Square's resuscitation as a company, with the game becoming an instant hit in Japan and restoring Sakaguchi's faith in the medium, though the game wouldn't find its way here until 2003.



» [NES] The original *Final Fantasy* stood out in a mainly straightforward, creatively safe genre.

1988 (Japan)
Final Fantasy II (NES)

■ Establishing the series' radical notion of starting again between entries, creating an all-new world and characters, *Final Fantasy II* was a hardcore follow-up with a daring (and polarising) levelling-up system that worked depending on your actions in battle. Progressive, yes, but wickedly hard to master. The sequel was significant in many regards, most notably expanding the idea of story in the series by giving the characters real names and personalities, with Yoshitaka Amano's character designs resonating with audiences. This helped forge the franchise's long-term trademarks of creating camaraderie between your party members, not just mechanically but also narratively. On top of this, well-known iconography of the series like the yellow bird-like Chocobos, as well as a recurring character called Cid, made their official debut with the second title, which went down extraordinarily well in its home nation of Japan.

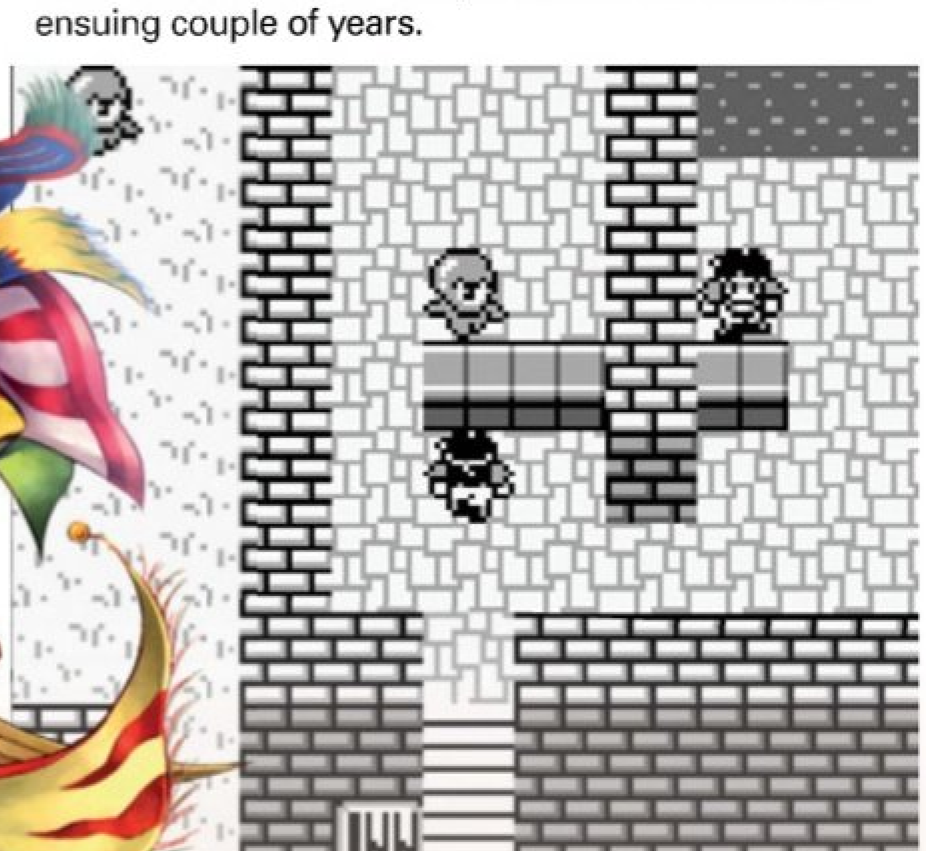




» [NES] The game first arrived in the UK on GBA.

1989-1991 (Japan)
The Final Fantasy Legend series (Game Boy)

■ Technically part of the *SaGa* series, Square renamed this series of Game Boy RPGs with the *Final Fantasy* moniker in order to gain more attention from a Western audience. Two sequels were released in the ensuing couple of years.



» [GB] *Final Fantasy* arguably became a dumping ground for spin-offs later on, but *Legend* was worthy of the name.



1990 (Japan)
Final Fantasy III (NES)

■ Generally considered a bit of a step sideways for the series, *FFIII* is considered to lack as compelling a story, as it reprised a lot of the same ideas as the original, though it did further develop the combat's class system to accommodate a more complex approach. Not released in the west until the DS version years later, *FFIII* was saddled with a somewhat unimaginative world, and often ridiculous difficulty curve, culminating in the incredibly difficult boss fight gauntlet towards the end. Today, the DS re-release exposes signs of a waning formula, even with the fairly freeform class system. It was clearly time for another change.





» [NES] The third game is only really notable for its class system, which progressed nicely from the original's.

» [NES] By this point, the standard *Final Fantasy* tropes were set, including storylines that use crystals as a McGufffin.

1991
Final Fantasy Adventure
(Game Boy)

■ Confusingly, this was the second Square RPG to use the franchise's title as a marketing hook. We now know this as the starting point of the *Mana* series. This also technically marked the debut of Yoshinori Kitase on a *Final Fantasy* game, whose work on *FFVII* in later years would make him custodian of the franchise.



» [GB] It took the *Final Fantasy* name for this great RPG to get a translation.

1991 (Japan, US)
Final Fantasy IV (SNES)

■ *FFIV* felt like Square was starting afresh on the SNES, creating a milestone in the storytelling element of the series and the grand depiction of its setting. Even with the new hardware, however, the developers faced technical restrictions that saw a significant amount of content cut, yet this restraint kept the pacing of the adventure so brisk that it had a positive effect on the overall experience. The introduction of the Active Time Battle system, which transformed turn-based combat into reactive encounters, once again distinguished the series' ability to switch direction from its RPG contemporaries.

The game's operatic story focuses on a dark knight, Cecil, who is exiled from the kingdom of Baron for questioning the king's immoral request of raiding civilised towns. Cecil is soon joined by a diverse band of warriors, who face the power-hungry villain Golbez in an adventure that takes the player's party to an orbiting moon in order to stop him. The positive response to evolution in both characterisation and gameplay mechanics would reshape *Final Fantasy* over the next two decades. As this was the second title in the series released in the US, Square renamed it *Final Fantasy II* there.





1992 (Japan)
Final Fantasy V
(SNES)

■ The fifth game's progression system was another benchmark for *Final Fantasy,* elaborating on the job options from *FFIII* but layering on additional abilities depending on your choices, as well as the ability to combine classes in order to create a specific, ideal party of fighters. It was the most eminently customisable entry in the series so far.

The story was relatively uninspired, however, with a comparatively dull set of characters compared to *FFIV*'s morally-challenged heroes (protagonist Bartz is especially naff), along with an utterly clichéd villain in ExDeath. The lack of an initial Western release meant it was still fairly obscure within the trajectory of the series. This would mark the final time Sakaguchi directed a *Final Fantasy* title – he would serve instead as producer and designer afterwards.



“A massive, technically ambitious adventure set in a steampunk-infused world”

1993
Final Fantasy: Mystic Quest
(SNES)

■ The first *Final Fantasy* released in the UK (though the name was dropped here) is perhaps unfairly overlooked, featuring an action-oriented style of play that sat at odds with the rest of the series, with a focus on environmental interaction that could have yielded a different path for the franchise had it been more successful. It's a little strange, playing a *Final Fantasy* game without a numbered HP meter, with the added ability to jump.



» [SNES] Weirdly, the *Final Fantasy* name was dropped in Europe, where it's known as *Mystic Quest Legend*.

1994 (Japan, US)
Final Fantasy VI
(SNES)





» [SNES] Nice *Star Wars* reference, though Biggs was mistranslated as Vicks in *FFVI*.

■ Squaresoft had mastered the 2D RPG on SNES, and the wonderful *Final Fantasy VI* was the fruit of its labour: a massive, technically ambitious adventure set in a steampunk-infused world. Its twisty narrative was grounded with a sort of magical realism, and was extremely dark compared to previous entries in the series. *FFVI* demonstrated that Square's ability to tell such tales had come a long way in just the three years since *FFIV*'s release. Featuring a gigantic cast of rich characters, the sprawling tale encompassed multiple strands of storylines, a slew of optional side-quests, and a world map that was literally redrawn after iconic villainous clown Kefka sent it into chaos.

Yet it wasn't just a step up in storytelling and presentation. *FFVI* afforded players more equipment-based options in customising characters thanks to the Esper system, which opened up the possibility of teaching every character powerful spells in order to succeed in the tougher, later stages of the story. Combined with the emotional characterisation, *Final Fantasy*'s storylines had become increasingly vital over the trifecta of numbered SNES titles, and many cite *FFVI* as their favourite in the series.



1997
Final Fantasy VII
(PSone)

■ The *Final Fantasy* that changed everything. The seventh instalment saw Square ramp up its staff and budget to tackle a 3D chapter in the series, which switched to the emerging PlayStation hardware for its CD-ROM capabilities. Looking back, this was an enormous risk, yet the rising culture of PlayStation and *FFVII*'s cinematic presentation secured it an astonishing level of hype prior to release. Yet it was story that would seal *Final Fantasy VII*'s status as an era-defying piece of entertainment.

With a sci-fi yarn that focuses on abusing the planet's resources, and the titanic repercussions of that, *FFVII*'s cast of characters, headed by Cloud but accompanied by equally beloved figures like Tifa, Barret, and Vincent, were key to its resonance with this new audience, while scary primary antagonist Sephiroth brought a *Jaws*-esque tension to the unfolding of this 60-hour experience. Of the many moments that underlined *FFVII*'s impact, it was of course the shock death of Aeris at the climax of the game's first act that would be talked about frequently in the ensuing 15 years.

FFVII is a triumph in gameplay, too, its Materia system offering a new way to hone character abilities, while the 3D world map brought a new level of immersion to the all-important exploration element of the series. The vision of *FFVII* was triumphantly ambitious, and suddenly the *Final Fantasy* brand was a global phenomenon.

1997–present
Chocobo series
(Various)

■ A light-hearted offshoot of *Final Fantasy* focusing on the odd yellow birds, the *Chocobo* games have tended to focus on racing and dungeon crawling, but the undoubted highlight has to be the card-collecting in *Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales* on the DS.



1997–present
Final Fantasy Tactics series
(PSone, PSP, DS, GBA)

■ Square turned its hand to grid-based strategy RPGs and yielded enormously positive results with 1997's *Final Fantasy: Tactics*, which hit the same high standard as the main series. With three main instalments and a remake, the superb *War Of The Lions*, which is best played on PSP, Square successfully expanded the franchise for the first time into a (slightly) different genre. *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance* opened up the format to new players, yet was equally fiendish in its difficulty, while its DS sequel *A2: Grimoire Of The Rift* continued these Ivalice-set spin-offs.



1999
Final Fantasy VIII
(PSone)

■ Following its largest hit ever with *FFVII*, the company took a big risk with *FFVIII*, incorporating a totally different battle system based on 'Junctioning', which was essentially harvesting spells from enemies and attaching them to stats to give them a boost. The intention of the developers was to make players actively think about the combat system, though this unusual alteration to the balancing of progression naturally divided players.

With a story about a cadet school fighting a nation governed by a sorceress – eventually, as you find out, from across time – *FFVIII* was certainly an anime-inspired tale. It was engrossing, if not quite as refined as previous offerings, with character Squall typifying the grumpy, amnesiac emo hero, while his antagonistic opposite, Seifer, represented the mirror image of that archetype. Its European-inspired world deliberately contrasted *FFVII*'s bleak setting, though, helping to make *FFVIII* an equal experience to its predecessor, even if the game didn't have the same cultural impact.



INTERVIEW

Motomu Toriyama



WORKED ON:
Final Fantasy VII (Event Planner)
Final Fantasy X (Director)
Final Fantasy X-2 (Director)
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings (Director)
Final Fantasy XIII (Director)
Final Fantasy XIII-2 (Director)

What is your personal opinion on the franchise and its evolution?
I personally regard *Final Fantasy* as content that invariably offers experiences of the finest story and gameplay supported by state-of-the-art game technology and completed with high-quality graphics. We have never been bound by restrictions of the RPG genre and always made our best efforts to produce a game with a unique universe. One of the reasons for *FF*'s long-standing popularity is probably the fact that each title in the series has taken care to tell a truly human drama which can strike a chord with humanity's universal emotions while pursuing new elements to be included in the game.

What do you like about the franchise? What would you like to change in future?
The franchise has survived 25 years, and each title has had to face a different set of challenges because they were developed with different game concepts, for different platforms and by different staff in the development team. This actually helps us as developers to continue making games with a fresh mind and we find joy in being able to express our creative ideas. As a result of this approach, each *FF* title has won many fans and, thanks to them, we can set ambitious targets for the next project to express our own ideas while, of course, trying our very best not to disappoint.

What are your favourite moments from the series?
My favourite moment is the opening scene from *FFVI*, where Magitek Armors walk up a snowy mountain. It was still on SNES at the time. It is a classic scene to me as it gives you a feeling that you are about to play a dramatic game. The soft music by Mr Uematsu was brilliant, too. In fact, *VI* was the last *FF* title I enjoyed purely from a player's perspective, because I started being involved in the series as development staff from *FFVII* onwards.

In what ways have previous titles influenced your own *Final Fantasy* games?
FFVI was an SNES title and I sincerely admire all the careful work put in by my senior developers back then. They provided a foundation for *Final Fantasy* with, for example, "manually drawn graphics with a great attention to every detail to demonstrate craftsmanship" and "richly dramatic direction including music". The policy of *Final Fantasy* is to bring out each creator's individual capability to fully overcome any restrictions of the console. I would call it an *FF* gene and it will continue to be found in any *FF* titles I get involved with in future.

Why has the *Final Fantasy* series stood the test of time?
What I regard as our mission is to deliver the most "appropriate" *Final Fantasy* titles which go along at the time and suit the given environment for playing games.

Can you recall an anecdote from working on the games for us?
With *FFXIII-2*, we carried out user tests at early stages of the development process as an experimental attempt. We were aware that the previous game, *FFXIII*, had drawn criticism from gamers who thought the game progression was too linear. To deal with it, we established a new structure for *FFXIII-2*, which would enable us to accommodate consumers' views and incorporate necessary changes while the development was still underway. Each of the *FF* titles has many loyal fans and they support the project as much as us, the development staff. I am determined to collect their voices and feedback on websites and learn lessons from them for future projects. That is the way we develop games and I intend to stick with it.

2000 (Japan), 2001 (Europe)
Final Fantasy IX (PSone)



■ Sakaguchi described *FFIX* as "a reflection of all the previous works in the series", and it shows, returning to the medieval style of world seen in pre-*FFVI* titles but with a contemporary sheen. There are a lot of visual nods to earlier entries, particularly in the design of Vivi, the cute-but-dangerous child wizard character in *FFIX*. Centred on a group of characters caught between two warring nations, it has a swashbuckling adventure quality, and a little less melodrama than *VII* and *VIII*. Its battle system, though, was relatively antiquated, and being released at the back end of the console generation meant that it was the lowest-selling entry since the SNES days.





2001 (Japan, US), 2002 (Europe)
Final Fantasy X (PS2)

■ *FFX* offered experimental character progression and the strongest realisation of a digital setting yet, thanks to its all-3D environments. With Asian landscape-inspired design, the tenth instalment had the kind of art direction not seen before in a game, aided by the transition to PS2. The sense of place in *Final Fantasy X* was remarkable, even if abandoning the world map concept made for a more linear main quest, with previous locations changing as you revisit them later on. *X*'s combat system was a little safer than before, a slower-paced turn-based venture, yet the level of customisation behind everything – weapons, abilities and even summons – was at its deepest. The Sphere Grid literally let players create the characters they wanted to, structuring progression like an enormous boardgame where experience buys you moves around it.

Final Fantasy X's story is overshadowed by uneven voice-acting and a sometimes strange translation, despite being thematically rich. It sees a fictional religion, Yevon, using a giant monster known as Sin to oppress the population, by scaring them into worship and away from technology. Protagonist Tidus, taken 1000 years away from his home of Zanarkand at the start of the game, soon finds that the reality behind Sin is intrinsically linked to his past.





2002-present
Kingdom Hearts series
(Various)

■ Born from an elevator conversation between Disney and Squaresoft execs in Japan (they shared the same building) *Kingdom Hearts*' pitch was originally *Final Fantasy* meets Disney, with cameos and music to match in this ultimate nuts-and-gum combo of fan service. Its first instalment remains the best and most comprehensible of the series, now deep in its own endless list of spin-offs.



2003 (Japan, US), 2004 (Europe)
Final Fantasy X-2 (PSone)

■ Notable for being the first direct sequel in the series, *X-2* threw out the serious tone of its predecessor in favour of a sickly, anime-style horror show, which made the whole thing feel a little like a straight-to-DVD sequel, despite a return to the job system for the first time since *FFV*. A massage mini-game and an eviscerated version of *FFX*'s wonderful aside Blitzball were among its biggest crimes.



» [PS2] Putting the *Final Fantasy X* heroines in skimpy clothes wasn't enormously progressive.

2002 (Japan), 2004 (US)
Final Fantasy XI
(PS2, PC, Xbox 360)

■ *FFXI* took the job systems of past games and brought them to the MMORPG stage, in an entry that only attracted a fraction of the series' millions-strong fanbase – about 500,000 at its height. Still, that's all a publisher needs for a successful online RPG, and Square Enix recently declared the eleventh game as its most profitable *FF* title ever. The PS2 version, which required the bespoke Sony hard drive, was never released in the UK.





2004 (Japan)
Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII (Mobile)

■ A mobile phone-bound, Japanese-only episodic action RPG, this is definitely the most niche title in the *Compilation Of FFVII* anniversary project, focusing on the morally ambiguous Turks employed by the Shinra Company.



2003-2010
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles series (Various)

■ Marking Square Enix's return to Nintendo platforms after opting for the PlayStation with *Final Fantasy VII*, *Crystal Chronicles* was a team-based action RPG of sorts that didn't really have a lot in common with *Final Fantasy*, but proved a good match for the GameCube regardless. The first game was noted for its smart (if demanding) integration of GBA connectivity, but subsequent instalments have gotten increasingly arbitrary in their relationship to the franchise. The *Zelda*-esque *Crystal Bearers* on Wii, and tedious cross-platform DS and Wii fluff *Echoes Of Time* marked particular lows for this consolation prize to Nintendo platform owners. *Ring Of Fates* (DS), *My Life As A King* and *My Life As A Dark Lord* (both WiiWare) round out this sub-series.



» [WII] *The Crystal Bearers* was a poor attempt to ape Nintendo-style action adventures.

INTERVIEW

Yoshinori Kitase



WORKED ON:
Final Fantasy V (Field planner)
Final Fantasy VI (Director, main scenario)
Final Fantasy VII (Director, story)
Final Fantasy VIII (Director)
Final Fantasy X, X-2, XIII, XIII-2, Compilation of FFVII (Producer)

What is your personal opinion on the first entry, looking back?
While I pay my respects to those who created the first *Final Fantasy* 25 years ago, I am excited that the series keeps changing.

What do you like about the series?
I like the lack of restrictions from the previous titles. I believe that the transition from *FFI* to *FFII* determined the fate of the following titles. I personally support the fate as it does not force you to take over the story or mechanics of the previous title and allows the series to evolve constantly.

What are your favourite moments from the series?
I have lots but am particularly fond of two scenes from *FFVI*; the Opera and Daril's Tomb.

In what ways has it influenced your own games?
Songs became an important feature in later *FF* titles and the Opera scene may have been the pioneer in this regard.

2005 (Japan), 2006 (UK)
Dirge Of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII (PS2)

■ Square Enix got out of its depth with this third-person shooter contribution to the *Compilation Of Final Fantasy VII* anniversary project, a spin-off centred around Vincent Valentine that grew repetitive very quickly thanks to its poor pacing and mechanical flaws. Despite that, the odd decent reference to *FFVII* helps to soften the blow, but it's ultimately little more than a beautiful curio for the fan that just can't let go.



2006 (Japan), 2007 (UK)
Final Fantasy XII (PS2)

■ Fraught with behind-the-scenes troubles – particularly the departure of *Vagrant Story*'s Yasumi Matsuno as director due to apparent health concerns – *Final Fantasy XII* was subject to several delays, and, having taken over twice as long as *FFX* to complete, was no doubt an expensive bookend for the series' life on PS2. The resulting game is a fascinating concession to an open MMO-style of design. A critical hit, some traditional *Final Fantasy* fans were put off by its slow-paced real-time combat – which was based on presetting commands in a system known as Gambits – and fairly boring *Star Wars*-esque story, though the elimination of random battles was deservedly praised. Its main narrative weakness came in the form of Vaan, perhaps the blandest protagonist of the series, who was relentlessly overshadowed by sky pirate, Balthier. *FFXII* was still noted as a positive sign of the franchise's long-term creative health, as well as its ability to reinvent the JRPG genre.



2007 (Japan), 2008 (US, Europe)
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII (PSP)

■ A candidate for strongest spin-off, *Crisis Core* tells the story of Sephiroth's descent into madness through the eyes of Zack, Cloud's friend and mentor, crossing over with flashbacks of *FFVII* to complete that story. An action RPG that clearly takes its cues from *Kingdom Hearts*, the tale at the centre of *Crisis Core* is engaging because of your memories of *FFVII* – that Zack, your character, is betrayed and then killed by his former employer, Shinra. The entirety of this well-produced PSP title builds up to that climactic, sad moment, and even allows you to play through that inevitable demise. It makes for an uneasy tale that fills in the gaps of *FFVII* without over-embellishing them, a love letter to fans of its most famous instalment.



» [PSP] *Crisis Core* is yet another underappreciated PSP classic.

2007 (Japan, America), 2008 (Europe)
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings (DS)

■ *Revenant Wings* is a more accurate example of a direct *Final Fantasy* sequel than *X-2*, following up *XII* with an action-heavy strategy game, yet still capturing the breadth of the world in that gorgeous isometric form.





2008
Crystal Defenders (Various)

■ *Final Fantasy* does tower defence with relatively little panache, but it was a decent enough attempt to integrate turn-based fighting into that trendy sub-genre.



2008-2011
Dissidia: Final Fantasy series (PSP)

■ A brilliant fusion of action RPG and themed beat-'em-up, *Dissidia* placed all the heroes and villains of *Final Fantasy* against each other in a heady bit of fan-pandering. Yet there's far more to it than novelty, as it offered a generous number of storylines, an incredibly large library of *Final Fantasy* music and a meta-game of unlocking extra content through an overarching in-game experience system. Wonderful stuff, and due an HD remake.



» [PSP] The original *Dissidia* was pirated five times to every copy sold.



» [PSP] The definitive versions of both *FFIV* titles are collected together on PSP.

INTERVIEW

Takashi Tokita

WORKED ON:
Final Fantasy I (Graphics)
Final Fantasy III (Sound)
Final Fantasy IV (Game design)
FFI & II Advance Dawn Of Souls (Producer/remake planning)
FFIV Advance (Supervisor)
DS version of FFIV (Executive producer/director)
Final Fantasy IV: The After Years (Executive producer)

What is your personal opinion on the first game, looking back?
It was *Dragon Quest* that initially set RPGs in place solidly in Japan by combining elements of two major IPs, *Ultima* and *Wizardry*, with the manga culture. Following the success of *Dragon Quest*, Mr Sakaguchi had an ambition to create something which would surpass it. That is how *Final Fantasy* started. *Dragon Quest* absorbed the manga culture, whereas *Final Fantasy* was innovative in the way it introduced animation-like visual style/direction and added extra depth with sci-fi elements.

What is it you appreciate about the series?
The most distinctive and creative feature of the series is the fact that each title aimed to achieve a different set of unique goals. I find it difficult to answer the questions in a generalised manner as different creators at different times have opted for various approaches as to which areas of the previous *FF* titles should be kept in or replaced and what new challenges should be taken on.

What are your favourite moments?
Although there have been so many great scenes, if I must single one out, I would mention the opening section in the first *Final Fantasy* game. You see no title logo displayed until you have seen the prologue at the castle and, as you are about to walk over the bridge, the warriors are silhouetted while the logo comes out and the theme tune is played out… it was sensational.

In what way did this influence your own work?
I reproduced the scene in *Final Fantasy IV*. When Cecil and Kain decide to set out on their quest to wipe out monsters, the theme tune is played while the castle is displayed together with its background and a monologue. Also, the opening in *FFI* introduced a style in which the scenes and music are switched over at an individually gratifying moment rather than following a set rule, which has given an impact on all the subsequent titles of the series.

Why has this series stood the test of time?
Due to technological advances in game platforms and media, we are now in an era when it is common to develop high-capacity games for HD consoles. If compared with cinema, it would be the time when filmmakers were so enthusiastic about using CGI to present visually opulent scenes. I think that the time background makes the nature of each game so vital. As far as I am concerned, the essential parts of games are impactful concepts, and gameplay that offers a pleasant experience.

Can you share some anecdotes from working on the games?
I have witnessed numerous anecdotes over the long course of the 25-year history of the franchise and here I would like to share with you a few episodes which, to my mind, hold utmost relevance to game development of the current times.

When we developed the scenario for *Final Fantasy IV*, Mr Sakaguchi contributed basic concepts first and the staff came up with different ideas to be added. The initial scenario was too huge for the available memory and we had to cut it down to a quarter of it. We knew that no half measures would be sufficient to scale it back by 75% and had to make drastic reductions wherever possible by minimising depictions everywhere apart from the opening sequence and other particularly important scenes.

As a result of these efforts, I believe that we managed to produce a well-paced, strong and well-modulated story for the player to enjoy. Now we are fortunate enough to be able to develop games with a much larger scale in many aspects; capacity on game consoles, gameplay time, production resources, development period and staff. I think that the fortune makes it all the more important for us to have concepts which can work not only with addition but also with subtraction.

2008 (Japan), 2009 (US, Europe)
Final Fantasy IV: The After Years (Mobile, WiiWare, PSP)

■ Here's an oddity, and a first for *Final Fantasy*: a direct sequel released episodically on phones, WiiWare and in full on PSP, almost two decades after its original instalment. Built in the image of the fourth game with returning characters and a multi-stranded storyline, it's a solid nostalgia trip for fans of the series' SNES era, even if there was no real net benefit to making it look visually similar to the original.

2010
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes Of Light (DS)

■ A tribute to traditional *Final Fantasy* RPGs, developed by the talented people behind *FFIII* and *IV*'s DS remakes, Matrix Software, *The 4 Heroes Of Light* is a pleasantly contemporary interpretation of Sakaguchi's earlier works.



2010
Final Fantasy XIV (PC)

■ Currently going through a substantial revamp after a poorly-received debut in 2010, *FFXIV* is yet another MMO that seems at odds with the traditional *Final Fantasy* fanbase. We're curious to see if its next iteration, *A Realm Reborn*, will do anything to reverse that mentality.







2010
Final Fantasy XIII (Xbox 360, PS3)



■ The most divisive instalment of recent times, due to its overwhelming linear structure, *FFXIII* has the audiovisual hallmarks and out-there emotional storytelling of classic *Final Fantasy*, it's just all set in a beautiful, relentless corridor. A *Gears Of War* RPG, as some called it. A representation of the modern identity crisis facing the series, the game's excellent currency-based fighting system was mostly overlooked as critics honed in on the lack of deviation from the main quest. There's no debating that *Final Fantasy XIII* brought a sense of grandeur to the current generation of hardware, however, if not the progression it needed to silence the doubters.

"FFXIII has the audiovisual hallmarks and emotional storytelling of classic Final Fantasy"

2011 (Japan)
Final Fantasy Type-0 (PSP)



■ *Type-0* is a high-end strategy action RPG hybrid that was originally part of the *Fabula Nova Crystallis* sub-series (sigh) with the *FFXIII* titles. With an *FFVIII*-style school setting and an onslaught of franchise iconography, it's basically just mean of Square Enix to tease an overseas release rather than announce one.



2012
Final Fantasy XIII-2

(Xbox 360, PS3)

■ Square Enix's reaction to the cool fan response of *XIII* was playing to the gallery, going in the other direction and creating a completely non-linear, nonsensical storyline that straddles time and space, as well as the second direct sequel in the series' history. Players take on the role of Serah, Lightning's sister from the first game, in a much lighter, shorter and easily-paced follow-up, that is perhaps too confused in its multitude of elements to be considered a true return to form.







2012
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy

(3DS)

■ *Theatrhythm* celebrates *Final Fantasy*'s 25 years through music, collecting tracks from every main instalment and retrofitting a rhythm action game around it. Beautifully presented, this is the ideal way to enjoy what every game has contributed to the overall DNA of *Final Fantasy*.

INTERVIEW

Hiromichi Tanaka



WORKED ON:

Final Fantasy (Game design: designing battle system and UI)

Final Fantasy II (Game design: designing battle system, UI, map system)

Final Fantasy III (Game design: designing battle system, UI, map system)

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles and Tactics series (Executive producer)

Final Fantasy XI (Producer)

Final Fantasy III (DS) (Executive producer/director)

Why do you feel the series has been so successful?
It is a series in which each title offers a universe with "swords and magic" based on different elements, which is the only thing they have in common and the creators of each game have pursued and successfully realised the most interesting features at the time.

What do you think sets this franchise apart from other fantasy series?
I like the fact that it is always possible for the creators to try and realise what is considered to be the best at the time without feeling any restrictions or obligations to relate the game to the previous title.

What has been particularly memorable about working on the *Final Fantasy* series?
The main programmer for early *FF* titles was an American guy and I had to discuss gameplay specs with him on the phone every single day. At the time my command of English was quite limited and I always felt exhausted after our long telephone conversations. We have some fond memories of working on that project together, though.

What is your favourite moment from the series?
It is the title screen in the first *FF* game, which is not displayed until you have completed the first quest, set out on a journey and walked over a bridge.

And in what ways has it influenced your own *Final Fantasy* games?
With *FFII*, we wanted to come up with something even more interesting than *FFI*'s opening I just mentioned. So, we made a battle start as soon as the game is activated but your party gets obliterated, which I thought was a nice surprise.

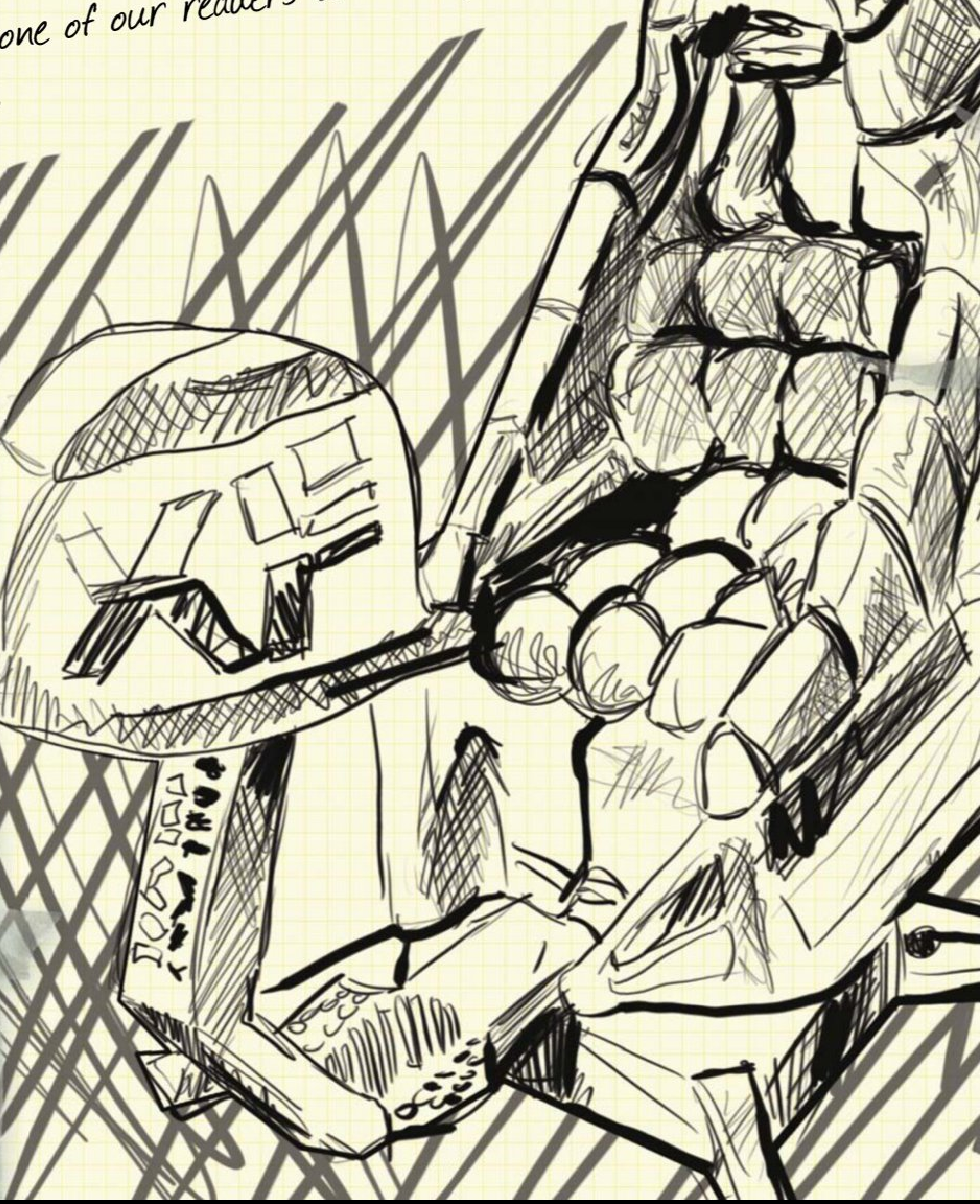
Are you surprised that *Final Fantasy* has stood the test of time?
I would not have thought at the time that the name of the series would be remembered after a quarter of century.

IT'S ALIVE! THE KONIX MULTI-SYSTEM IS BACK

Seven years ago, Retro Gamer told the inside story of the Konix Multi-system's demise. We also sent out a rallying cry for more information – a plea that led one of our readers to take up the cause. Craig Vaughan re-investigates...

In 2005, when **Retro Gamer** chronicled the demise of the Konix Multi-system, our research began with a few magazine previews found in a loft. We knew for a fact that no hardware or games had survived the ravages of time, while the internet shamed itself with the lack of information it made available. Our published article ran with a cover disk featuring long-lost footage of pre-release games and allowed all interested parties to chronicle their involvement in the doomed venture.

Paper records aside, everyone accepted that the machine was dead – everyone except Mark Campbell, a **Retro Gamer** reader and Konix obsessive. His story ends with the startling news that he is now in possession of the only known Konix development kit in existence, along with a copy of the game *Robocod*, which was scheduled for release alongside the machine. His journey, inspired and assisted by **Retro Gamer**, is an astonishing tale of one man's tenacity in pursuing the impossible.





The Konix King, Mark Campbell

Name: Mark Stephen Campbell
DOB: 26/09/1973
Nationality: British
Currently residing in: Amsterdam
Occupation: TV broadcast engineer
Favourite games system: Konix Multi-system
Favourite released games system: PC Engine
First computer: Commodore 64



The wackiest design had the entire chair covered with an umbrella-type canvas to ensure privacy and no distractions

So why this obsession with the Konix Multi-system?
It's the one machine that really captured my imagination as a child. Being a voracious reader of games magazines I learned about the Konix from them and was attracted to how dynamic it looked. I wasn't even a console lover at that stage – I subscribed to the 'computers are better because you can play games and write programs on them' camp.

What was different about the Konix?
There was something about this machine that made it jump off the pages. It's almost impossible to explain the frenzy that the industry whipped up. *Ace* magazine ran sensational headlines claiming that the machine was all-powerful and was sure to be the runaway market leader. I've said on my website that the Wii is forward thinking, but Konix pushed the envelope years before Nintendo's baby was even conceived.

So what went wrong with this unique British venture?
As time went by, I saw more previews of games, read about the system and began lusting after it. Then it all started to go wrong and the machine blinked out of existence like some sort of quantum accident. Magazines would occasionally run retrospective pieces about the machine saying that it was doomed to fail, but that just didn't add up. I couldn't see why everyone was getting embarrassed about it. The Multi-system was supposed to be fantastically innovative, yet it failed to launch. Were we supposed to believe that the manufacturer simply ran out of money and that no one chose to bail out this amazing product? The bottom line is that I was left with unanswered questions and an unsavoury taste in my mouth.

And so we fast forward to Retro Gamer's involvement with the project…
In 2004, I decided to collate all the information I could find about the machine. As I was tinkering with the idea of putting together a website, I saw the most amazing article in **Retro Gamer** magazine. It was a fascinating, in-depth read that stole my thunder. On the flipside, it was the last push that I needed to launch my website (www.konixmultisystem.co.uk). As I tracked sources I was very lucky to find that 99% of people were willing to recall their involvement with the machine. Since then I've invested hundreds of hours researching the Multi-system and genuinely believe that I've talked to almost everyone involved in its development.

How have things unfolded over time?
My website has flourished and I've secured significant interviews with key people. I've



The original 8-bit hit that inspired the Konix version



The functional graphics hide frantic gameplay

Minter's Mutants

Jeff Minter is an industry legend. Founder and head coder at Llamasoft (www.llamasoft.co.uk), his gaming efforts have been entertaining us since the ZX80 was in its heyday. His back catalogue consists largely of horizontal shooters played at breakneck speed against psychedelic backdrops. His *Attack Of The Mutant Camels '89* was one of the most anticipated Konix games never released. A re-imaging of the original Commodore 64 and Atari 8-bit hits, this *Defender*-inspired shoot-em-up was used to generate positive PR in the build up to the Multi-system's release.

Now, of course, all that remains of this game are a few ropey screenshots. Campbell has had trouble having meaningful conversations with Minter about the production of this game, but there is a small chance it still exists and that it could be emulated alongside *Robocod*. It would also make an excellent XBLA, PSN or IOS title, though its roots will always rest with the Konix. Only time will tell if Minter has a copy and what his attitude to a release is. Jeff is unceasingly generous with regard to sharing his historical hits and making them available free to the community, so retro gamers can only wait with baited breath....



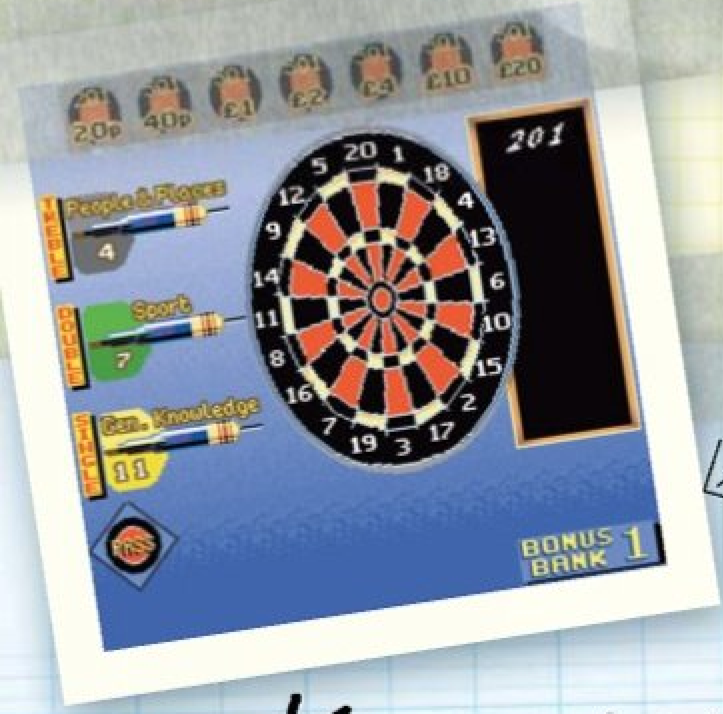
Jon Dean played a key role in the development of the Multi-system



Who knows what Minter's hiding about the Konix and his game?



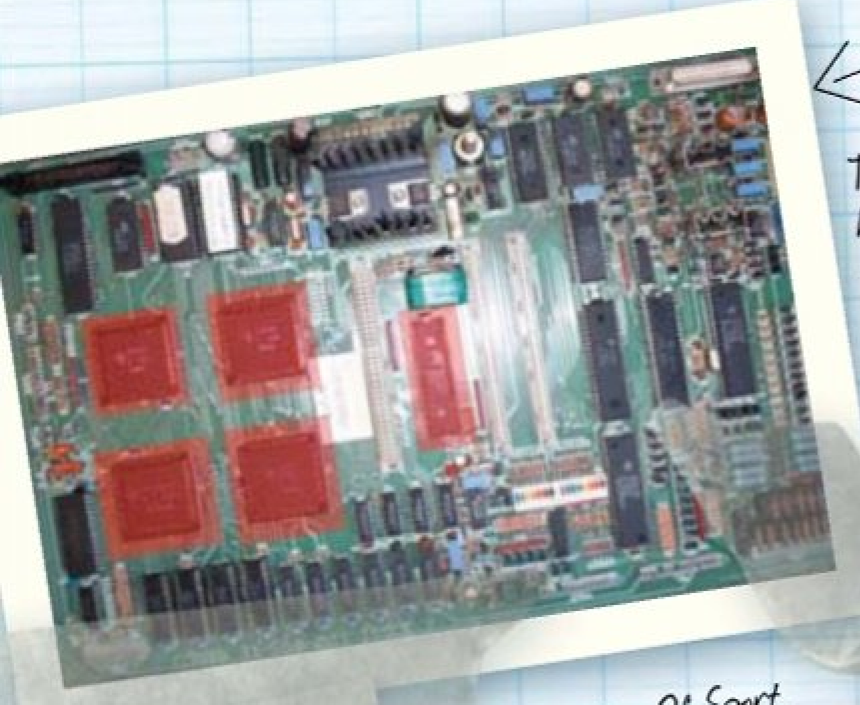
Issue 8 of Retro Gamer told the Konix story



Treble Top: A bell-fruit quiz machine with a twist

Konix hits the bars and clubs

It's a little-known fact that the failed Konix Multi-system hardware was refined and morphed into Arcade quiz machines after the technology was sold off to gambling machine manufacturer Bell-fruit. Knowing this, Campbell undertook a search that led him to Jon Dean's website (www.guv1.com). Dean's involvement in the Konix Multi-system project was well documented in our original article. His on-site CV hinted that, as well as his involvement in the Multi-system, Dean also had a hand in the Dave Lee Travis arcade game *Treble Top*. Campbell's research soon revealed that the Konix chipset was used in a number of Bell-fruit machines. These include *Inquizitor* and *A Question Of Sport*. It is believed that these machines ran software off a floppy disk drive as was the case with the Multi-system. Campbell has already teamed up with someone who has started emulating this system as the screenshots here demonstrate.



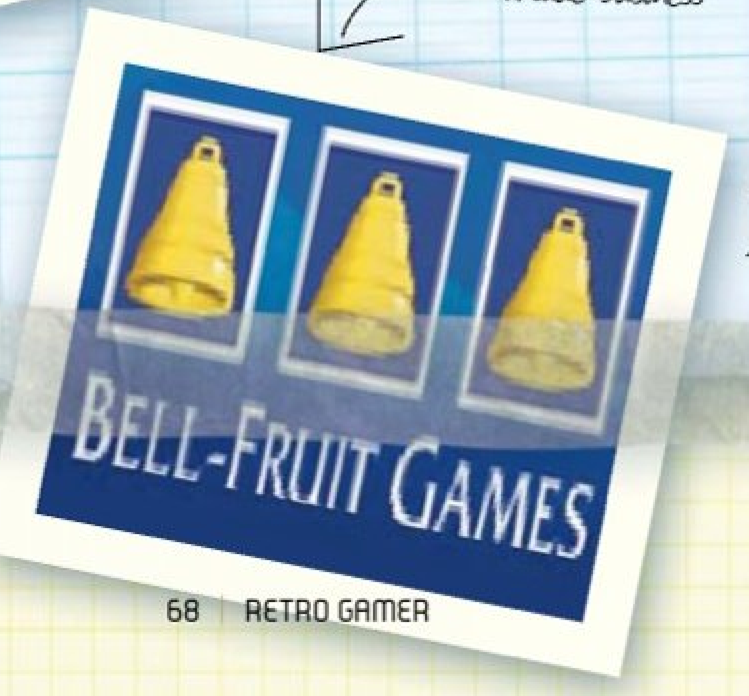
The Konix board at the heart of the gaming machines. The highlighted areas show Konix chips



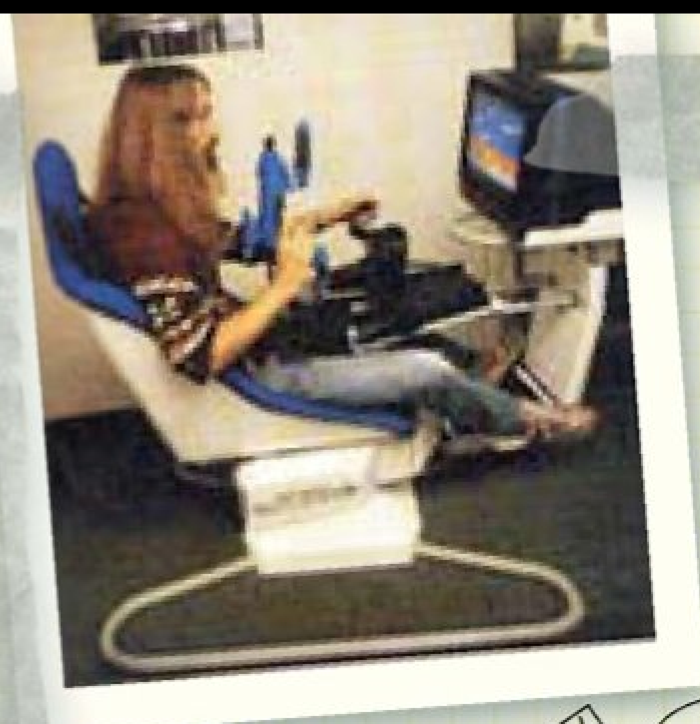
A Question Of Sport. Who knew it was basically a Konix Multi-system in disguise?



Bell-fruit is still going strong after forty years in the arcade business



A Question Of Sport was a popular machine. Have you seen one lately?



Llamasoft legend Jeff Minter tries out a chair for size



Tests using a power drill to tilt the chair



The chair in action – look at the tilt on that!



A rear view of the Konix Power Chair



A Konix Power Chair tipped upside down and being tinkered with

spoken to Chris Green, who was a production engineer at Konix. He had the foresight to 'rescue' some plastic moulds from the Konix Multi-system labs and kindly donated them to me. They are priceless historical artefacts and you won't ever see them for sale on Ebay. As my journey continued, I was approached by an independent filmmaker who was working on a show about groundbreaking British inventions that failed. Unfortunately, in its wisdom, the BBC eventually decided it didn't want to commission the programme. Nonetheless, it's a timeless story that could still be told ten years from now, so you never know.

Didn't a different TV programme touch on the Konix?
Yes, I think you're referring to the BBC *Money Programme* there. MSU is featured in a brief piece. MSU is the 'phoenix company' that rose out of the ashes left by the demise of the Konix. Unfortunately, an ex-MSU member who has a VHS copy of the feature is declining to release it at the moment.

More recently, you've made some game-changing discoveries. Tell us about those.
Chris Green remembered that the Power Chair was produced by a company called Level Six Design. It's that sort of detail that lets me start digging. Eventually I managed to compile a list of ex-Level Six employees. That's where a company called Product Partners comes into the story (www.productpartners.co.uk). They're an amazing 'concept and design' outfit, so it's no surprise to find their genius in the DNA of the Power Chair. Their MD, Paul Neal, was knee-deep in designing and building the prototype chair for Level Six and he kept excellent records, including some amazing video footage of the build. He's also in possession of concept art and design sheets that really put the chair into context. People need to know that the Power Chair existed – a set of stunning working prototypes were built against a ridiculously tight deadline.

Can you tell us about your project's breakthrough moment?
There have been two, actually. Neil Beresford, one of the programmers who ported *James Pond 2: Robocod* to the Konix Multi-system contacted me. He still had the source code and a compiled binary of the game which had been ported to the PC and Multi-system by Intellectual Software Consultants. In short, this means that I now have a working copy of *Robocod* for the Konix and we're only one step away from playing it. I always thought that **Retro Gamer**'s discovery of the launch game video footage was amazing, but I

"I now have a working copy of Robocod for the Konix, and we're only one step away from playing it"





The Konix Power Chair in all its glory

The Konix Power Chair

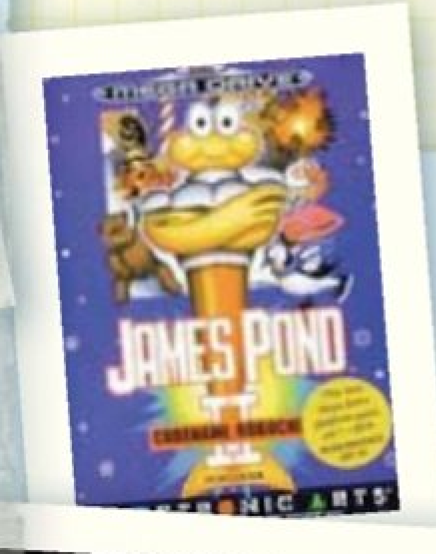
As much as the revolutionary morphing Konix controller promised to put gamers in the centre of the action, it was the Konix Power Chair that stole the headlines. Wyn Holloway, head honcho at Konix, wanted gamers to 'experience the reality' and part of that goal was to replicate the feeling of being in an arcade.

The concept and design work was undertaken by Level Six. They had just eight weeks to put together a bit of kit that would satisfy people that a mechanical chair for the home could be a reality. The chair was set to retail at £200, which, considering its complexity, was a flight of fancy. Just to manufacture the unit might have cost £500, but with distribution, marketing and retail costs added, it would probably have sold for more than £700. That was a small fortune at the time and a figure that would have made it a niche item. That didn't stop Konix putting it in the limelight at the head of its PR drive to sell the Multi-system and as new iterations lowered costs it might eventually have become commercially viable.

We'll never know, but folk like Jeff Minter did use prototypes, proving the concept. Until recently it was believed that all that remained of the prototype chairs was photographs. **Retro Gamer** is happy to reveal recovered video footage of the chairs is now available for a limited time at www.konixmultisystem.co.uk/retrogamer



The Level Six design team assembling a Power Chair

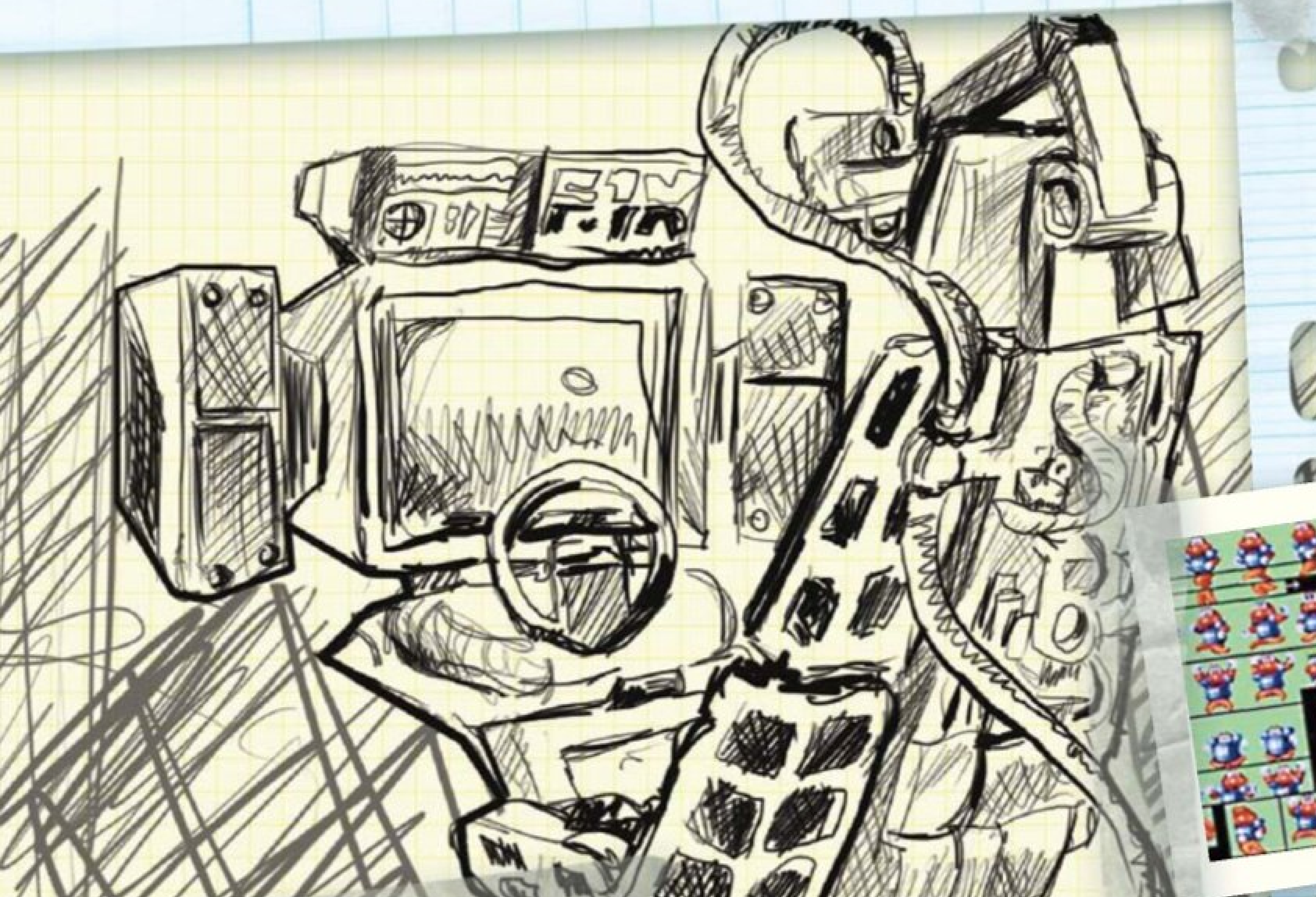




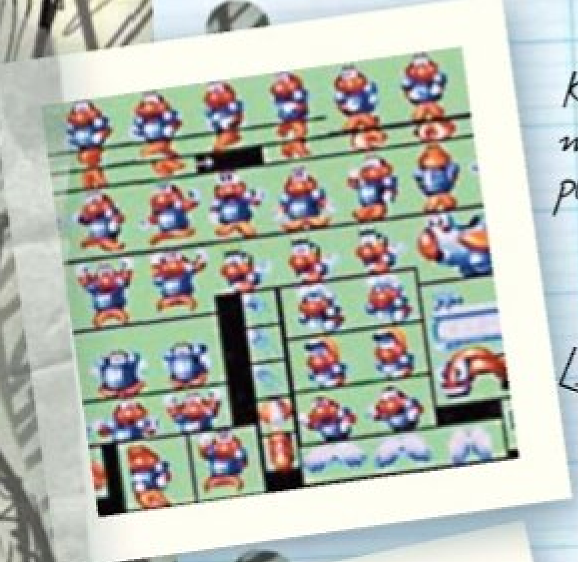
This Mega Drive screenshot of Robocod shows the quirky art design

Robocod returns

The promotional blurb for this *James Pond* sequel summed the game up well. 'Dr Maybe's dangerously fishy plans for world domination continue. In a slimy effort to sabotage the world's largest toy factory, he has planted penguin-bombs in various sites inside the North Pole. James Pond swims to the rescue as RoboCod in another massive oceanic adventure. His name is Pond, James Pond, and he stars in *James Pond: Codename Robocod.* Players control the heroic tadpole as he battles evil and stops super villains from taking over the world. The game is full of humour and action, with many platforming sequences. James has a number of spying abilities and items at his disposal, and players will need them all to defeat enemies like teddy bears, chocolate mountains, and whirling dervishes'. The game, originally released on Amiga, PC and the Mega Drive, later went on to enjoy outings on the DS and PSN and was thought lost forever in its Konix incarnation until it was recently given to Campbell. Believed comparable to its PC and Amiga cousins this colourful 2D platforming adventure is set to make its Konix debut thanks to the wonders of emulation.







Konix Robocod was a massive, colourful 2D platforming romp

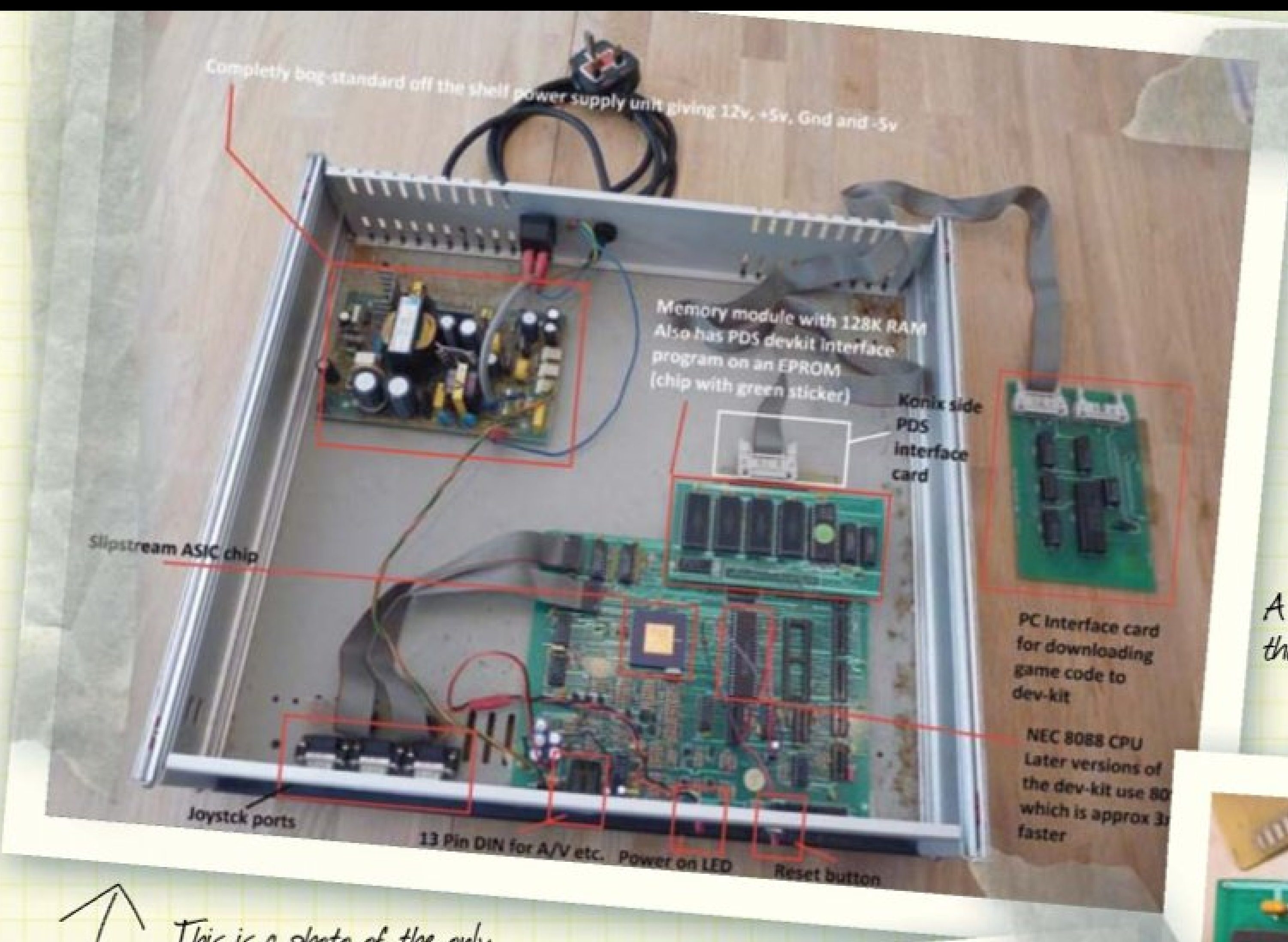


Robocod on the Konix Multi-system. It was thought to be lost forever…





These are some of the art assets that Campbell has dragged off the Konix disk



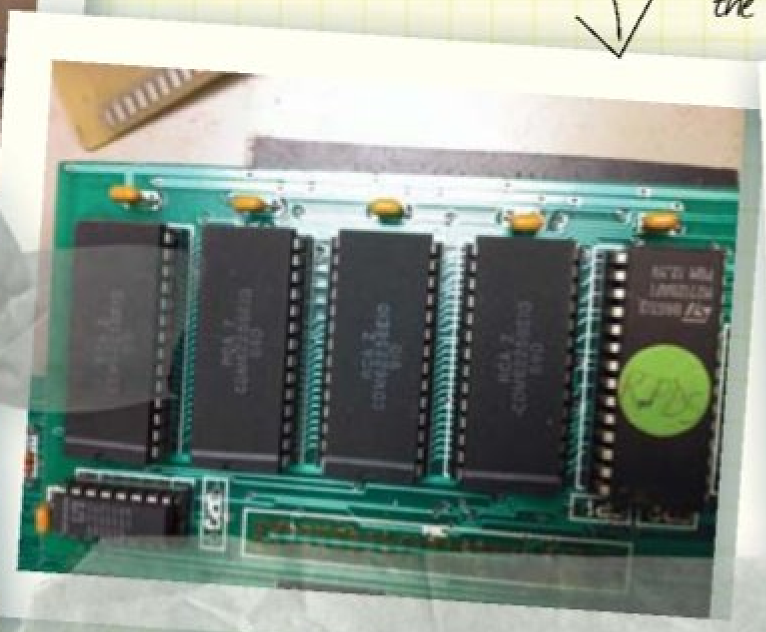
This is a photo of the only known surviving Konix dev-kit. Campbell has labelled the interesting parts of the board



The power supply unit – still in great shape after two decades



The Konix chip is labelled in yellow, the central chip shown is the NEC 8088 CPU



A 'massive' 128k of memory was at the heart of the Multi-system



A side view, showing the size and emptiness of the metal case housing the Multi-system

The return of the Multi-system

Mark Campbell is now the custodian of the only known Konix dev-kit in the world. Dev-kits are given to companies prior to a machine's retail release so that they can write their games on near-final hardware before a mass production run takes place. These kits are usually just a modified PC or a dedicated unit with a PC interface. This allows games to be built and for various tools to be run. Such machines are theoretically designed to function as close as possible to launch units, but they contain extra components for interfacing, probing and outputting information that home users don't need.

Because these machines are being used behind closed doors, function is more important than form, so they don't need to look pretty. And, compared to the final units that gamers get their hands on, these devices are prohibitively expensive. It's believed that the Konix Multi-system dev-kits cost approximately £5000, which is nearly £12,000 today. Dev-kits are often subject to specification changes and upgrades but in the case of the Multi-system, though the dev-kit has less memory, it is otherwise a near 100% match to the unreleased complete Konix Multi-system.

The beauty of this find is that the unreleased games were written on this hardware, so when missing gems are recovered there's no doubt that they will be 100% compatible. Campbell's task now is to emulate the dev-kit and run *Robocod*. Until recently that was a challenge thought impossible because the interface card required to connect the unit to a PC was missing. Now that one has been found it seems that the Konix Multi-system is about to reveal its secrets and usher in another era of 16-bit gaming.

> "I'm frantically looking for a Newstar machine, I'm calling on the Retro Gamer community to help"

never imagined that I'd actually have a release game in my hands.

If only you had the hardware to run it on…
Well it seems that perseverance brings its own rewards. On a day I will never forget, Brian Pollock (a programmer interviewed in the original **Retro Gamer** article) sent me an email saying that he'd found a Konix Multi-system development kit in his garage, despite everyone believing that they had all been destroyed. Brian arranged for me to become the custodian of the unit. Suddenly, from being nothing more than a document collector for a long-lost system, I now have a machine and a game to run it on.

Can we steal your thunder and suggest that the one game that everyone wants to play is Jeff Minter's *Attack Of the Mutant Camels '89*?
You're right – everyone wants to see the return of the Yak. What's interesting is that Jeff was heavily involved in the Konix story, but I haven't yet succeeded in getting an interview with him. In my eyes he's still the greatest indie coder that this country has ever produced and if we can save his game that would be hugely significant. He may well have an archive that includes the game and I'm sure he would be able to give me more detail about the Konix project too.

Sign us up to beta test the Multi-system emulator and *Robocod*…
I'm sure it will happen, but there's a little bit of work to do first. If there are any emu coders out there, please get in touch and we'll see how quickly we can get working on it.

How do you feel about bringing the Konix back from the grave?
I feel justified and exhilarated, but I know there's still work to do. In medical terms we've removed the corpse from the morgue having found faint vital signs. The patient's stable now, but in a coma. We just need to wake them up.

What news on finding a prototype Power Chair to go with the dev-kit and *Robocod*?
After the launch was aborted, I understand that a van was sent to pick up the prototype chairs, but staff discovered they had been 'liberated'. If you'd have asked me ten years ago, I'd have said they were put on a skip and destroyed, but I'm in talks with someone who is hinting that they know where the Harrods demo chair is…

Is there anything else we need to know?
As well as chip-less production-run PCBs of the Konix that I have acquired and the actual dev-kit, I've also got hold of a post-Konix version of the Multi-system – a dev-kit for a machine similar to a Memorex VIS, but with a Konix chipset. It was released branded as Newstar, TXC / TXE or Realistic. If anyone has a retail version, please let me know. I believe variants were also developed for Yanion as a VCD/Karaoke player with game-playing capability. I'm frantically looking for one of these machines and I'm calling on the **Retro Gamer** community to help. Finally, there might be an even rarer 'Konix-inspired' prototype games console out there that used two cartridges and produced 3D graphics. It was codenamed 'Project Popcorn'…

Good luck with your continued quest and let us know when we can play *Robocod*.
I'll be in touch.

Missing In Action

Retro Gamer once released pre-launch videos of the Konix Multi-system and its games. That footage is still available at http://tinyurl.com/czgumdz. With Konix emulation still in its infancy, we've used Amiga screens and sketches to represent some missing gems



Run The Gauntlet
Ocean Software

***Run The Gauntlet* had already cashed in on the popularity of multi-sports sims across various platforms. Slated to push the Multi-system to its limits, the game would have been an ideal showcase for the morphing controller as gamers took charge of vehicles as diverse as jet skis, hovers, speedboats and buggies.**



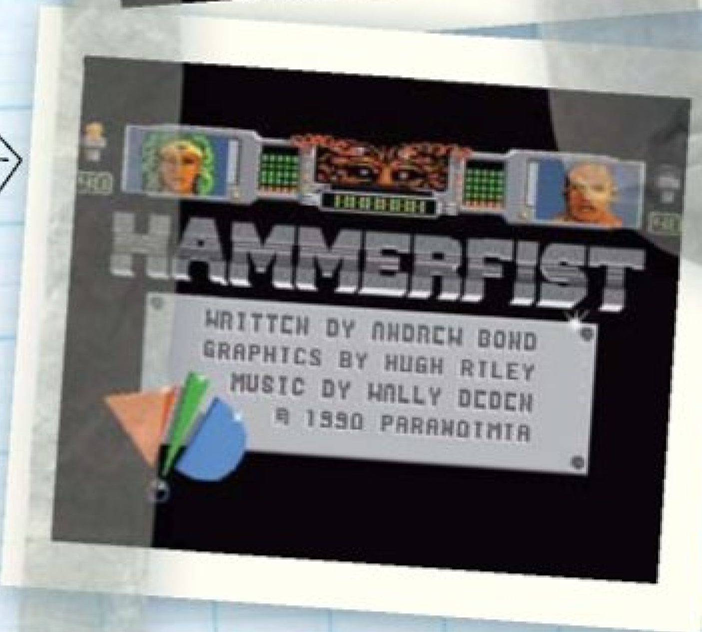
Eddie Edwards Super Ski simulator
Microids

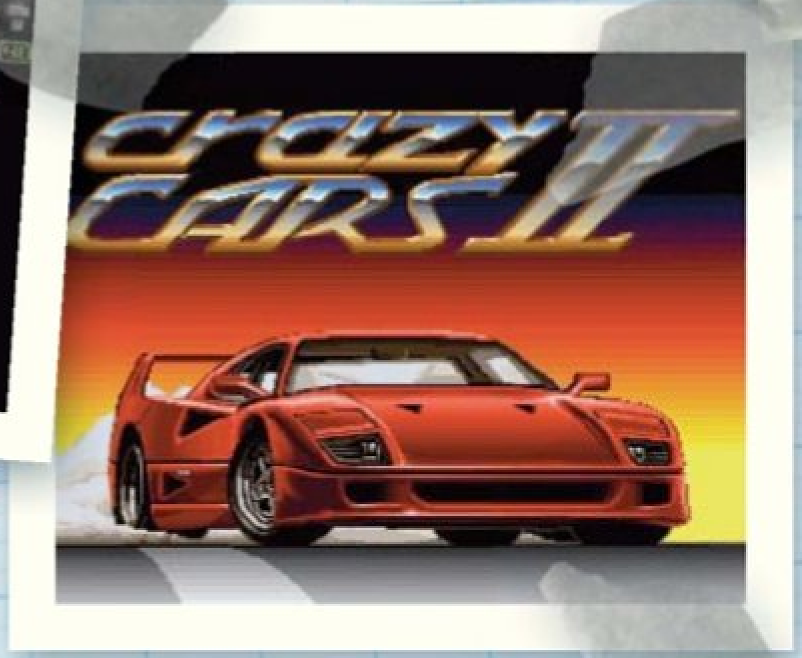
Some people have drawn unfortunate parallels between Eddie's ineptitude as a skier and the failings of the Konix system. That's a tad uncharitable because both the Multi-system and Eddie found themselves in the same position – showing uniquely British grit and determination while being outgunned and out-manoeuvred by the opposition.



Hammerfist
Vivid Image

Akin to the arcade classic *Rolling Thunder*, the Konix version of *Hammerfist* featured colourful graphics and beautiful character animation. With variants like *Vendetta* adding furious driving sections and *Last Ninja* throwing in devilish puzzles, *Hammerfist* faced tough competition, but topped many 'most wanted' lists thanks to its impressive visuals.



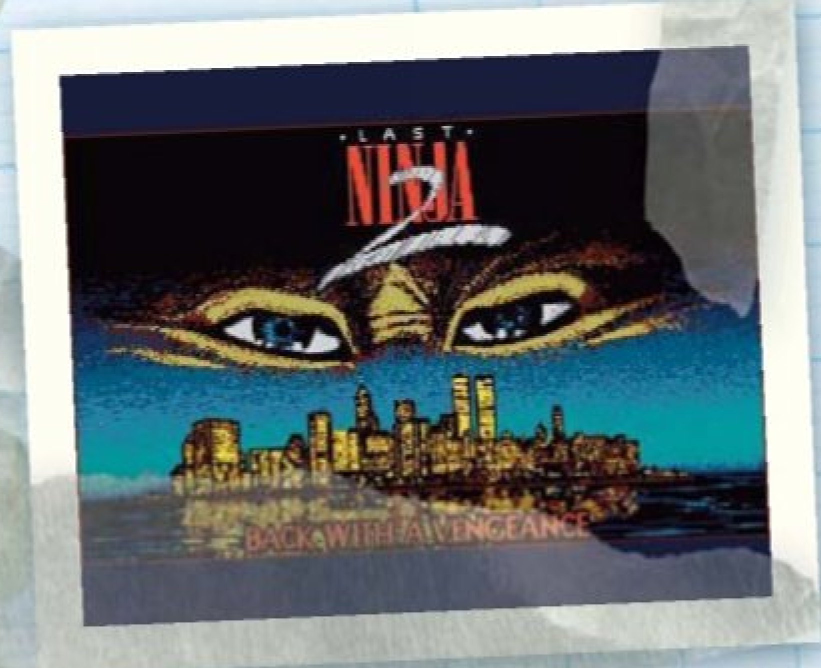


Starglider 2 Argonaut

This game would certainly have stretched the machine to its graphical limits, with the promise that the Power Chair would immerse gamers in space levels so real they would experience motion sickness. A smash hit on other formats, it's known that work started on this game, but there's no record of its milestones or completion.

Crazy Cars 2
Titus

An out-and-out arcade racer, *Crazy Cars 2* would have made use of both the steering wheel and *Power Chair*. With great graphics and a perfectly recreated sensation of speed, as the only car racer available this could have been an outstanding launch release, having previewed well in most magazines.



Bikers Argonaut

Trusted developer Argonaut software was tasked with bringing this *Hang On* clone to the Konix as a launch title. Given Argonaut's history and how effortlessly the Konix could throw graphics around, the results here could have been spectacular, especially if the steering wheel and Power Chair were used.



Last Ninja 2 System 3

This was scheduled to be released as a timed exclusive. Konix feared a flood of identi-kit driving and shooting games that would put gamers off its innovative machine. To that end *Last Ninja* was commissioned as the perfect antidote and was shaping up to be a real system seller when the plug was pulled.

Mutant Camels
Llamasoft

Deliberately ignoring the morphing controls of the Multi-system, the *Defender*-'inspired' *Attack Of The Mutant Camels* demonstrated the technical prowess of the machine and confirmed that it was more than capable of pushing psychedelic arcade-style graphics around with ease. Popular on other formats, the Konix version would have stood tall.

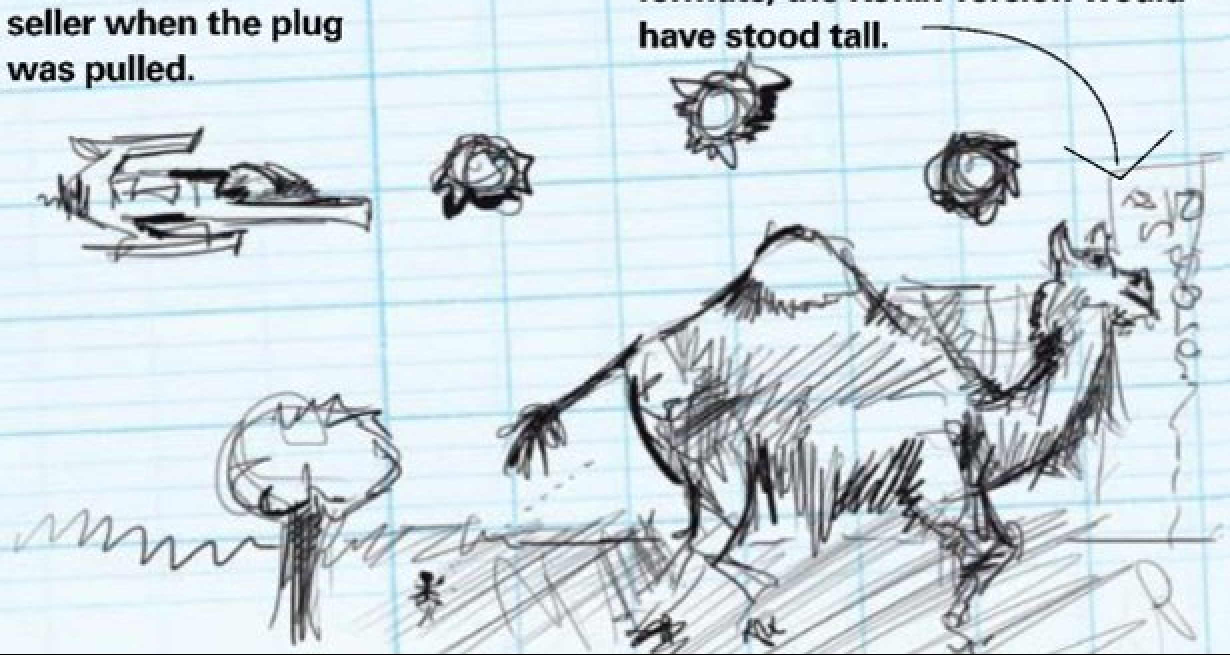


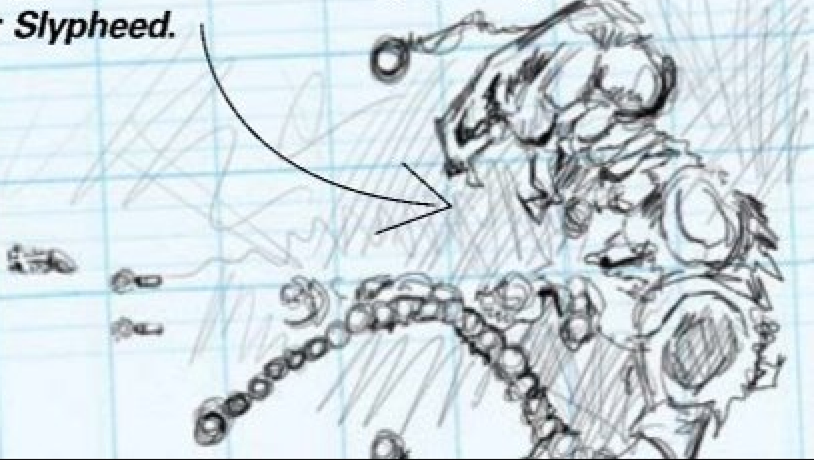
Award-winning shoot-em-up... by unknown

This was probably vapourware or a specific title that was being sought for the machine with negotiations still ongoing. The allure of this unknown gem endures to this day and whilst we may never know its identity, best guesses suggest it was either *R-Type*, *Wing Commander* or *Slypheed*.

Starray Logotron

There's no doubt that Minter's trippy psychedelic efforts are a taste never acquired by some, so this more strait-laced *Defender* clone might have captured the hearts of any Minter-phobic gamers out there. Graphically outstanding and blindingly fast, this clone boasted hardware scrolling and throwaway 'just the one more go' twitchy gameplay.





IMPORT ONLY

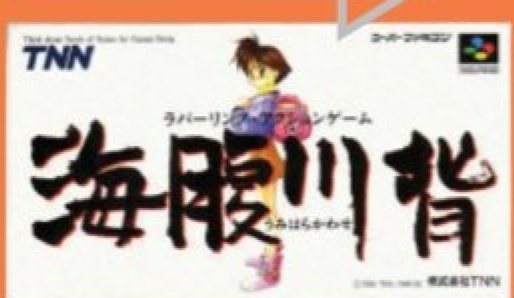
GAME ORIGIN



» CO-ORDINATES: 35°41' N 139°46' E

- » COUNTRY: JAPAN
- » POPULATION: 127,433,494
- » CAPITAL: TOKYO
- » NATIONAL LANGUAGE: JAPANESE
- » CURRENCY: YEN
- » TIME ZONE: GMT+9

INFO



- » **PUBLISHER:** TNN
- » **DEVELOPER:** ATELIER DOUBLE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SUPER FAMICOM
- » **ALSO ON:** DS
- » **GENRE:** PUZZLE/PLATFORMER
- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £60+

EVOLUTION OF THE GENRE

▲ Retro



BIONIC COMMANDO
RELEASED: **1987**
The granddaddy of the grappling platformer, *Bionic Commando* is more action-orientated than *Umihara Kawase*, and features soldiers in place of fish and a bionic telescopic arm instead of a lively fishing rod.

▼ Modern



BIONIC COMMANDO
RELEASED: **2009**
This superb 3D reboot of the *Bionic Commando* franchise nails the thrill of swinging and blasting through the air brilliantly. Enjoyable and challenging, it also has a rocking soundtrack, too. Track this awesome version down and play it until you love it like we do.

UMIHARA KAWASE

» We cast our line into the deep sea of import titles and pluck out Umihara Kawase, a Super Famicom platformer that tastes like Bionic Commando cooked in delicious Spirited Away batter



» [SNES] The world of *Umihara Kawase* is a bit bonkers, and is made up of sea creatures, black and white photographs, and even giant school stationary.

Developed by a little-known studio and released sole-ly (that's it for the fish puns, promise) in Japan, *Umihara Kawase* has become something of a cult Super Famicom title, thanks to the internet. Indeed, you might have seen its name crop up on a few retro gaming sites about obscure SNES gems, or even the odd best import games list. It's the Super Famicom platformer with the fishing rod-brandishing schoolgirl and giant fish patrolling its stages.

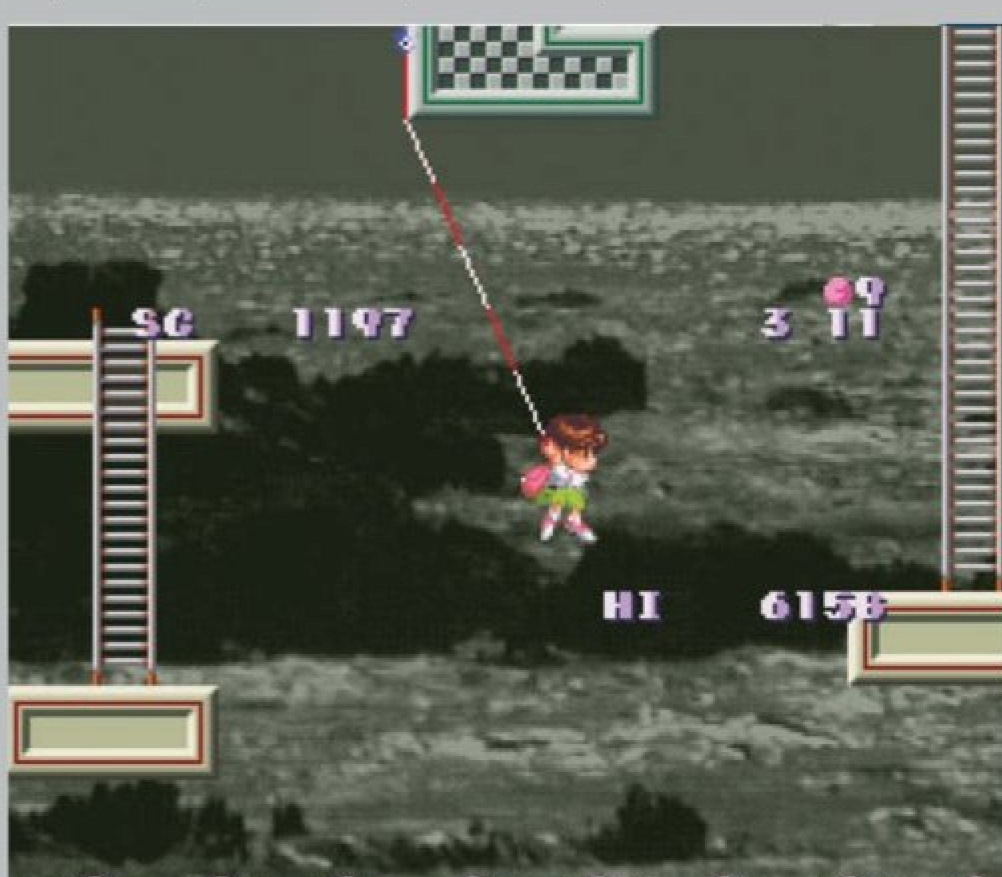
The premise of *Umihara Kawase* isn't all that clear. In fact if we had to come up with one to best give explanation to its zany gameplay, we'd say it's probably about a teenage girl with the world's most elasticised fishing rod, experiencing a rather nasty night terror after stuffing a pongy prawn sandwich down her throat. The consequent dream/nightmare/bizarre hallucination episode that she experiences finds her having to work through a series of whimsical stages to reach exit doors positioned in annoying-to-reach areas.

With levels featuring plenty of long gaps and death pits between platforms, you use the fishing rod as a grappling hook to get around. By aiming the rod with the D-pad, you can swing and manoeuvre yourself around the level. You can also pull yourself up by reeling in the line or lower yourself by letting it out. It's a mechanic that works well and is where pretty much all the appeal of *Umihara Kawase* comes from, but it does take a bit of practice to get the hang of, so prepare for a bit of wrestling with the controls initially as you battle to get yourself in the precise position needed to help you continue with your journey. And to make matter worse, the levels are occupied by large fish, eels and crustaceans that just seem to appear and disappear at random. You can hit these enemies with your fishing hook to temporarily stun them, and in this stasis they become safe to reel in and stick in your pink rucksack.

Despite its steep learning curve, those moments when you do perform an impressive feat of fishing line swinging to make it to the section of the stage you

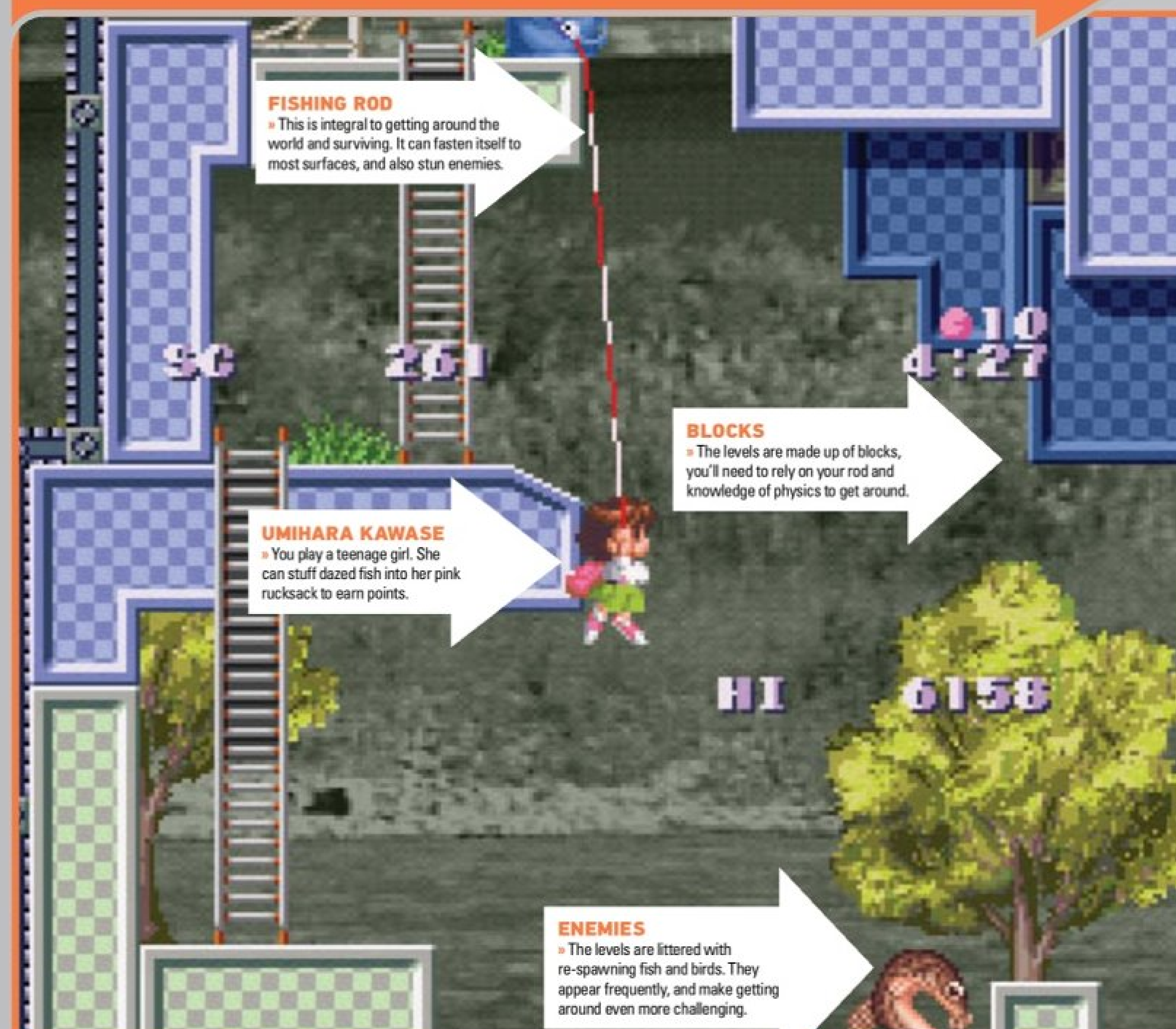


» [SNES] The puzzle stages are interrupted by occasional boss encounters. Sadly this fish is too large to stun so you'll need to come up with another way to reach the exit.



» [SNES] There are loads of different rod techniques you can use to get around, and completing the game will require mastery of them all.

GO DEEPER
A Fishing Lesson



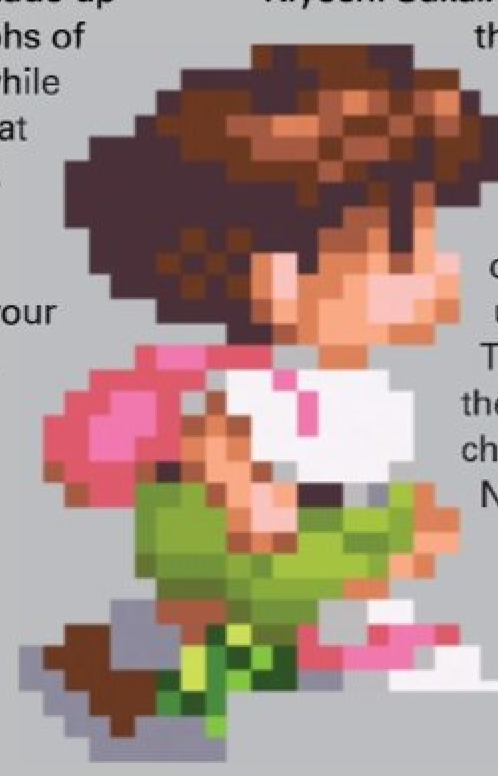
> "It's the Super Famicom platformer with the fishing rod-brandishing schoolgirl"

want is when the brilliance of *Umihara Kawase* comes to the surface. There's a real sense of achievement felt whenever you finish a level. Also, because of the way in which the stages are designed, and the fact your line will fasten itself to pretty much any surface, there are multiple ways to finish them too. Moreover, there are also a nice variety of clever little line-casting techniques to master too, and as you make progress you learn that later levels have been designed in such a way that you will need to rely on them all.

Though the sprites look nice and detailed, *Umihara Kawase* certainly isn't the prettiest game to grace the Super Famicom. If we're honest, its world is actually a little on the bland side. Backgrounds are made up of badly digitised black and white photographs of deserted beaches and rocky cliff bottoms, while levels are constructed from simple blocks that would look more at home in an 8-bit puzzler. With that said, it's not like you've really got time to take in the sights anyway, as the environment is just too dangerous to avert your eyes from your character for even a second.

Despite never migrating from Japanese shores, *Umihara Kawase* was popular enough to receive a sequel. *Umihara Kawase Shun*, which appeared on PlayStation, gave the series a bit of a makeover while its gameplay was leveraged more towards the puzzle feel of the original. It also featured isometric-ish 3D levels, a change that many fans argued made navigating the environment more difficult, and a shorter and thus springier fishing line too. A second edition of the game was also later released that made a few gameplay improvements and subtle changes to the visuals and presentation.

The series then went portable with the release of *Umihara Kawase Portable* on PSP in Japan. Based predominantly on *Shun*, it was developed by Rocket Studio and with no involvement from series creator Kiyoshi Sakai. However, Sakai did return to oversee the release of *Umihara Kawase DS*, an anthology for the DS of both the original *Umihara Kawase* and its sequel *Umihara Kawase Shun*.



If you enjoy your games with a side order of physics-based mechanics, we urge you to seek out *Umihara Kawase*. Though copies aren't cheap to buy these days, it is certainly one of the most challenging and quirky platformers found on Nintendo's 16-bit console.



CAN'T IMPORT? YOU COULD TRY



DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2: DIDDY'S KONG QUEST

» A challenging platformer with cutesy cartoon visuals and gameplay that requires a bit of brainpower to get around (in this instance deciding when best to use the distinct abilities of Diddy and Dixie), Rare's sequel to *Donkey Kong Country*, which many fans regard as the best in the series, is a tasty red meat alternative to *Umihara Kawase*'s fishy dish.

THE MAKING OF

RENEGADE

Before Double Dragon there was Renegade. Known as Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun in Japan, it was the first game to showcase Yoshihisa Kishimoto's fighting talent. Stuart Hunt steps into Nekketsu High School for a history lesson titled Kunio-kun: write what you know

A useful piece of advice to aspiring novelists and screenwriters is to write what you know. This doesn't just refer to working experiences (it would be a pretty limited writing career for many people if it did), but also to the emotions, memories, interests, passions and knowledge you have felt and experienced. This is not to say that everything you create should be semi-biographic, but instead make use of those instances where you can impart your own experiences and wisdom to your story and characters.

Because of their whimsical themes and outlandish characters, few videogames have been directly inspired by the lives of their creators. Shigeru Miyamoto wasn't a plumber, and to the best of our knowledge never owned a pet gorilla, but *The Legend Of Zelda*'s open world design was inspired by his love of exploring the hilly forest surroundings where he grew up, while his ball-and-chain enemy Chain Chomp is said to be based on a chained-up dog that barked at him in his neighbourhood. So there is often a connection between the creator and their game, but if there was ever a game that could be classed as almost an interactive snapshot of its maker's life, it's *Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun* – better known to Western gamers as *Renegade*.

Its creator, Yoshihisa Kishimoto, was a rebellious teenager. When he wasn't testing the patience of his teachers and hating school, he filled his spare time street-fighting with students from rival schools, watching martial arts movies, idolizing Bruce Lee, and playing the latest arcade games in game centres in Japan. When he graduated from high school, he found the doors of opportunity open to him were few. But Kishimoto knew what he wanted to be.

"I went to a design school because I wasn't able to do anything else," remembers Kishimoto. "My goal was to create action movies but it's a very long way to become a movie director. So, when I saw an employment announcement for Data East, I thought it was a nice opportunity to create my own games, with my own stories."



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** TAITO CORPORATION (US) TECHNOS (JAPAN)
- » **DEVELOPER:** TECHNOS CORPORATION
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP





» Kishimoto in his teenage years. Growing up he was a big fan of action films and legendary martial artist Bruce Lee.



» Kunio-kun was re-skinned and renamed for its US release. Here's a picture of its US location test.

It was at Data East that Kishimoto got his first taste of game development. It was there he directed the Laserdisc arcade games *Thunder Storm* (*Cobra Command*) and *Road Avenger* (*Road Blaster*). In 1985 though, Kishimoto left Data East to work for Technos Japan after he was tempted away with an offer to create action games for the firm. It was the opportunity he had been waiting for.

Kishimoto's first project for Technos Japan was *Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun* (*Hot-Blooded Tough Guy Kunio*), a fighting game that saw him put his first deep mark on the face of the games industry.

Kishimoto was an avid gamer and a fan of martial arts cinema, and these interests combined with his rebellious streak helped him to perfectly understand what gamers wanted from a fighting game.

"At that time there were a lot of shoot-'em-up games," Kishimoto remembers, "but I wanted to create something more 'realistic' because I thought it was a good solution to make users feel 'involved' when playing a game. There were already fighting games like *Spartan X* (*Kung-Fu Master*) or *Karateka* at that time. But the mechanics of almost all fighting games were similar to shoot-'em-ups (when you hit one enemy one or two times, he disappears from the screen). As for the other karate games they were 'clean sports games'. I wanted a dirtier and more realistic fighting game. I wanted an action game in which you felt every kick and punch. You just have to see characters animation in *Kunio-kun* to understand that it 'hurts'. And such violence was pretty new at that time."

Inspired by this idea to make an immersive and brutal fighter, Kishimoto wanted to also fuse the combat to a believable story. And looking to his own life and experiences for inspiration, remembered those high school rivalries he experienced growing up.

"When I was teenager, I was a furyo, which means a 'bad guy'. I disliked school and I spent my time with my friends fighting against other rival schools. We were high school students so we all were wearing our school uniforms, just like in manga (laughs). I was a huge fan of Bruce Lee and I wanted to be like him, to fight like him. So *Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun* is a game created from my own experiences. I think that it's the first 'autobiographical videogame' in the history of this industry! But the name of

> "I wanted a dirtier and more realistic fighting game. I wanted an action game in which you felt every kick and punch"

THE RENEGADE MASTER

Mike Lamb discuses his time working on Ocean's Renegade series





How did you come to be working on the home conversion of *Renegade*?
I was working at Ocean, when they got the licence for *Renegade*. I'm not sure how I was chosen to do it. It could be that they thought it was a big title and wanted someone good to work on it, but more likely I had just finished with *Arkanoid* and so I was the first guy available.

Had you played the original arcade game beforehand? If so, what did you think of it?
I hadn't played the arcade game before starting on *Renegade*. The first time I saw it was when Ocean got a *Renegade* arcade board for us to work off. It quickly became popular at the office, so popular that they had to put a lock on it to stop everyone goofing off. I had the key.

Were you concerned about how the three-button control system would translate on home computers?
The original arcade game had a joystick and three buttons (left attack, right attack, jump). This wasn't practical for the Spectrum. Most used a keyboard and I don't remember any three-button controllers – most were one button. I think my joystick and one button worked well – I may have tweaked it as we added attack moves like kneeling on the bad guy to beat the crap out of them and kneeing a dude in the groin, but mostly it seemed obvious what to do. They copied my scheme for the 64, but the Amstrad version used three cursor keys and a joystick. I thought that was a mistake.

You also worked on *Target Renegade*. Did you prefer/find it more challenging putting your own stamp on the series over trying to faithfully recreate an already existing game?
I worked on *Target Renegade* and it was a little different. We had more time – maybe six months instead of three? Also I could reuse my original *Renegade* code so I wasn't starting from scratch. It feels like I'm supposed to say I enjoyed making an original game more, but I kind of liked the technical challenges of getting an arcade game to work in 16k too. They were both fun in different ways

What is your best memory of working on the game?
The thing I remember most are the people who worked with me. Ronnie Fowles did the original Spectrum graphics and Dawn Drake worked on *Target Renegade* with some help from Martin McDonald (they shared some graphics between Commodore 64 and Speccy). We had small teams back then and worked fairly closely.





» The Japanese version of *Kunio-kun* was considered "too confusing" for a Western audience.

the hero, Kunio, was taken from Kunio Taki, the name of Technos Japan's president. He also was a bad guy when he was young!" Kishimoto laughs.

For *Kunio-kun* to feel immersive, the controls would naturally also have a crucial role to play. The team therefore spent a lot of time coming up with an innovative and robust control system based on the concept of having a separate button for left and right attacks. Requiring a single button press to attack an enemy instead of having to face assailants first, not only offered greater control but the attacks more responsive. Kishimoto explains how the control system started to take shape.

"At the beginning of the development we tried to use the same combination as *Karate Champ*, with two simultaneous joysticks. But I thought that hitting an action button to reproduce a punch was more realistic than controlling a second joystick. The second thing I want to say is that today, the beat-'em-up and Vs. fighting games use action buttons for kick or punch. But in *Kunio-kun*, the left action button is used to fight to the left. And the right button is to fight against a guy at your right. It's very dynamic and allows players to gain time when your character is fighting and surrounded by many enemies. I love this way of playing these games."

"I just wanted to make a game based on my own high school experiences… but they told us it was too Japanese for the US"

Kishimoto and his small team ran into many conceptual problems during *Kunio-kun*'s four month development cycle. With *Kunio-kun* being so innovative, they had no idea whether the ideas they were implementing were good or not or, more worrying, how they would be received by gamers. The controls, setting and violence made sense in relation to realism and immersion, but there were concerns as to whether this approach would hold wide appeal.

When *Kunio-kun* finally shipped in 1986, the team realised that it had been right to trust its instincts on the controls and design. However, there were still certain problems.

"Many PTA and police called us because they found *Kunio-kun* too violent for children," remembers Kishimoto.



» [Arcade] *Kunio-kun*'s mantra was realism, brutal bloody realism.

"But we answered them 'Sorry, but children are not supposed to be inside game centres without an adult, so take more care of your children' (laughs), and took the phone off the hook. But it's true that *Kunio-kun* had a bad influence on Japanese game centres at that time. After *Space Invaders*, there were a lot of yakuzas and furyos in game centres. And video game publishers tried to make this industry's image better. That why we saw many cute games like *Pac-Man, Mappy, Donkey Kong* and so on during the early Eighties, and women and couples came back. But after *Kunio-kun*, bad guys came back massively to game centres."

Following *Kunio-kun*'s success, Techno Japan's US arm was eager to bring it to US audiences. Its concern however wasn't regarding the violence, but whether the game's Japanese high school setting would hold any kind of appeal outside of Japan. Kishimoto's bosses thus decided that *Kunio-kun* be given a makeover to make it more marketable in the West. And





» [Arcade] On its release *Kunio-kun* caused controversy due to its violent nature, with many parents complaining at the time.



» [Above] **Kishimoto aspired to be an action film director – cinema's loss became gaming's gain.**



» [Amstrad CPC] *Renegade* had a surprisingly brilliant home conversion courtesy of Imagine Software..

so Kishimoto and his team quickly got to work on preparing their game for its US release later that year.

"When I developed *Kunio-kun*, I really didn't think about any Western release. I just wanted to create a game based on my own high school experiences," says Kishimoto. "But when we sent the game to our US staff, they told us that US people won't understand the plot, the references and that it was too Japanese for this market. So, I had to create a new character design and new backgrounds to make it fit with Western culture. For that, I went to see a movie called *The Warriors* to get inspiration. The sprites and the general backgrounds came from here. We called our game *Renegade*."

The characters, levels, and story were all tweaked. Rather than follow the noble actions of titular schoolboy Kunio standing up for his bullied friend Hiroshi at he hands of rival high school students, the team replaced him with a waistcoat-wearing gang member who now had to fight his way through gangs of street thugs to rescue his girlfriend. These changes didn't hurt its appeal; *Renegade* was a hit, and soon found itself receiving plenty of home ports.

While most conversions replicated the arcade game, the Famicom/NES ports differed notably from its arcade counterpart. Both were overseen by Kishimoto and developed in-house at Technos Japan. Notable for being the first home videogame that Technos Japan ever developed, Kishimoto remembers some of the issues that he and his team experienced as they went about trying to squeeze his arcade game into Nintendo's 8-bit console.

"It was challenging because in 1986, the arcade technology was many times more sophisticated than the Famicom hardware. But we also had to be careful about certain details. For example, in the Stage 3 of the arcade version you fight in a dark street at night. But in this street there are some adverts and posters for adult shops to get some 'adult time' with girls. You know what I mean? (laughs) Of course, Nintendo didn't want us to include those so those shops just became bars." Kishimoto continues, "Working on an arcade game is very different from working for consumer game machines. With arcade games, our bosses want us to make people spend 100 yens coins every three minutes. But with the Famicom we





» [Arcade] Kishimoto redefined the scrolling fighter with *Renegade*, and then did so again with *Double Dragon*.

» [Arcade] Locations were also altered for the US translation, like the opening subway station stage, which was clearly inspired by *The Warriors*.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DOUBLE DRAGON II
(PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

WWF SUPERSTARS
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1989

SUPER DODGE BALL
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1987

had to give fun to children for 10 to 15 hours. So the difficulty settings are very different and not so frustrating as in game centres. But *Kunio-kun* is quite a short game, and I wanted children to think that they were getting value. So I input new stages and extra sections."

Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun was kept as two different franchises for a long time. In Japan, *Kunio-kun* would be expanded into a huge series of games set in and around its high school universe, with games that encompassed sports from dodgeball, soccer and baseball. But in the US and Europe many of these games received localised ports with new titles and visual makeovers that disconnected them from the franchise – *River City Ransom, Super Dodge Ball* and *Nintendo World Cup.*

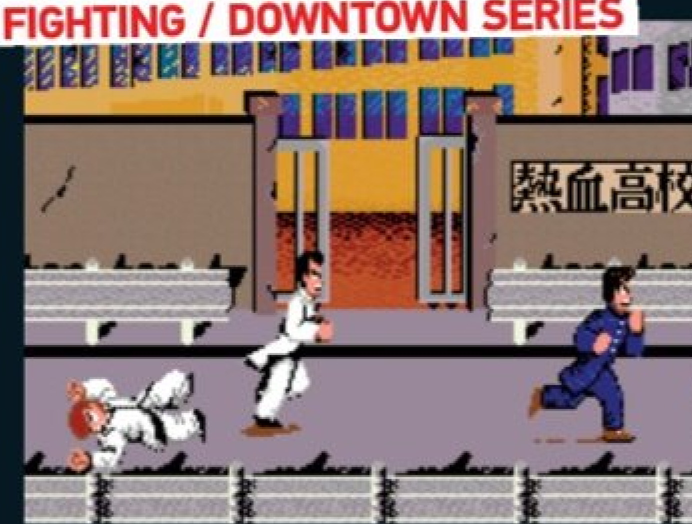
Meanwhile in the UK, Ocean Software released two *Renegade* sequels: *Target Renegade* and *Renegade 3: The Final Chapter.* The sequels expanded the gameplay of the original *Renegade* arcade game, and kept firmly to the gang warfare theme (with the exception of the final game, which opted for a more whimsical time-travelling story). Kishimoto was unaware of the existence of the two Ocean *Renegade* sequels when we mentioned them to him. But then, at the time of their release he was pretty preoccupied. Following the success of *Kunio-kun*, Kishimoto succeeded in pushing the fighting game forward even further, cementing his name in arcade history forever with his next iconic arcade brawler, *Double Dragon.*

Retro Gamer gives special thanks to Florent Gorges for his help with the article, and Yoshihisa Kishimoto for answering our questions.

THE KUNIO-KUN SERIES

Here's a run down of the key titles in the Kunio-kun series, which has encompassed a variety of different genres and games under different aliases in the West. How many of these Kunio-kun games have you played without even realising it?

FIGHTING / DOWNTOWN SERIES



Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun / Renegade
The first entry in the *Kunio-kun* series became popular for its realistic violence, unique control system and impressive visuals. The original game took place in and around the fictional Nekketsu High School but received a *The Warriors*-inspired makeover for its US release. As it was considered to be too confusing for a Western audience as it was, certain aspects like the specific school setting were changed.

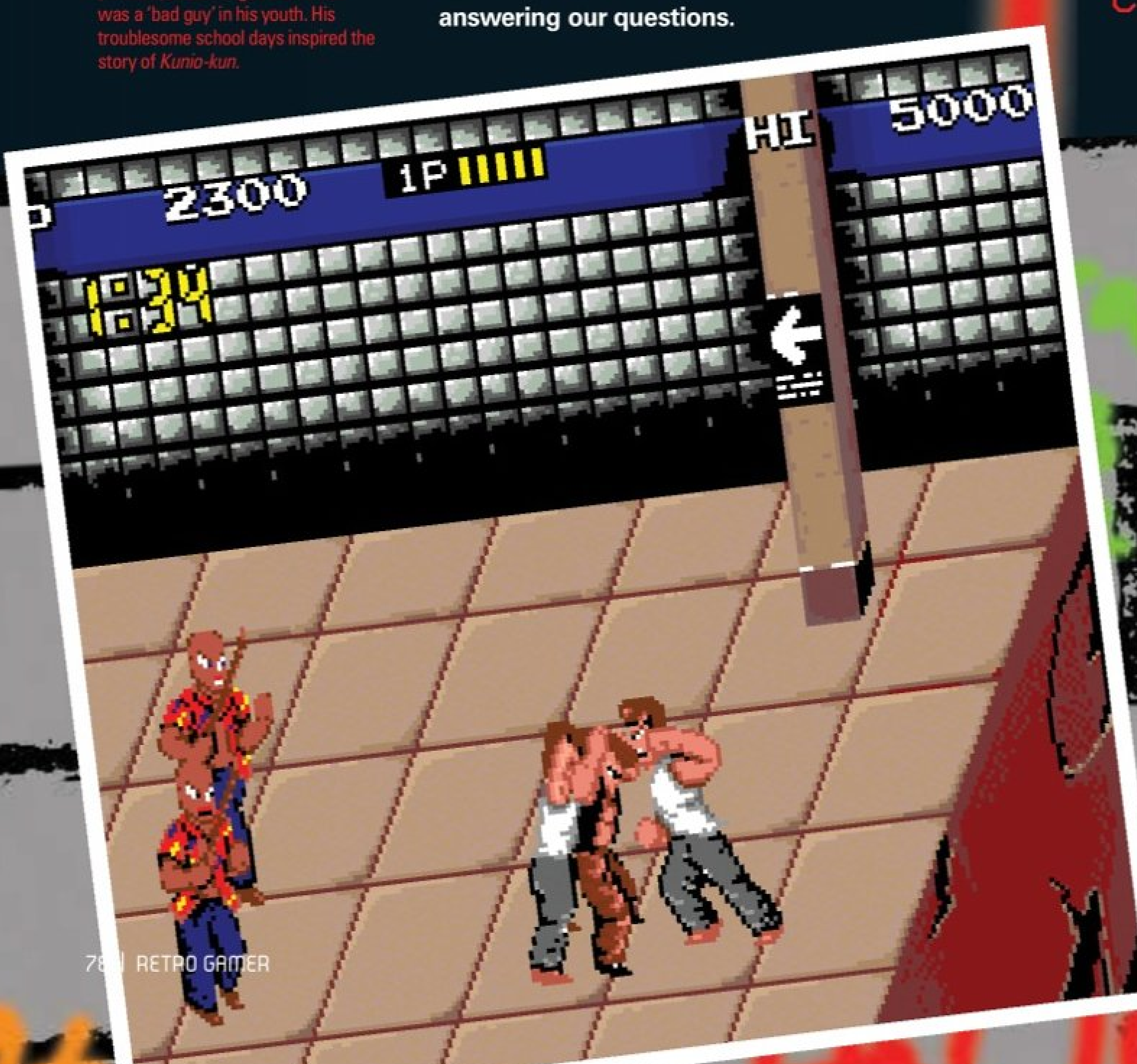


Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun (NES) / Renegade
The NES/Famicom ports differed somewhat to their arcade counterparts. Kishimoto and his team expanded a few of the levels and added some new elements too, including a cool motorbike section. It was a bright and engaging beat-'em-up.



Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari / River City Ransom / Street Gangs
This cult NES classic expanded the *Kunio-kun* universe with loose RPG elements. A richer story was coupled with the action, and players could now boost their character stats by spending coinage dropped by defeated rival gang members.

> With arcade games, our bosses want us to make people spend 100 yen coins every three minutes



» [Arcade] Bottom left. Released at a time when cutesy arcade games like *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong* were the norm, *Renegade* stood out on its release.



» [Arcade] Bottom right. Kishimoto was a 'bad guy' in his youth. His troublesome school days inspired the story of *Kunio-kun.*



Downtown Special – Kunio Kun no Jidaigeki Dayo Zenin Shuugou!

This *River City Ransom* sequel is set in feudal Japan. The game has more of an open world feel with Kunio, joined by a sidekick, on a virtuous mission to retrieve medicine for his poorly master.



Nekketsu Koha Kunio-kun: Bangai Rantō Hen / Double Dragon II (Game Boy)

Portable *River City Ransom* sequel with combat that suffered from the ministration process. When Acclaim brought the game to the West it was given a *Double Dragon* makeover and rebadged as *Double Dragon II*.



Nekketsu Kakutō Densetsu / Hot-Blooded Fighting Legend

This was an ambitious four-player versus fighter. The flickering is sadly a noticeable issue, but the game has a nice selection of moves, great visuals and a good variety of fighting environments. Lots of fun, and a great addition to the franchise.



Shodai Nekketsu Kouha Kunio-kun

Kunio and pals are on a school field trip and clash with a local gang in Osaka. Changes include items to level up your character now appearing in vending machines, the visuals given a more realistic look, and a more varied assortment of enemies to biff.



Shin Nekketsu Koha: Kunio-tachi no Banka / The New Hot-Blooded Tough Guy: The Eulogy of Kunio and Co.

The story of this River City sequel takes a more adult turn as it revolves around a hit-and-run incident that Kunio and his pal Riki are wrongly convicted for.

SPORTS SERIES



Bikkuri Nekketsu Shin Kiroku! Harukanaru Kin Medal / Crash 'N The Boys: Street Challenge

It's sports day, with five teams of kids from rival schools competing in various events, including Swimming, Hammer Throw, Hurdles, Roof Top Jumping and, of course, Fighting.



Downtown – Nekketsu Koushin Kyoku – Soreyuke Dai Undoukai

This sort-of sequel to *Harakanaru Kin Medal* features new events, including Cross Country, and Ball Breaking Fighting Tournament. It has considerably more of a beat-'em-up vibe than the previous game.



Nekketsu! Street Basket: Ganbare Dunk Heroes

One part brawler, one part insane street basketball fever dream in which the *Kunio*-cast get to shoot hoops and clobber each other with melee weapons. With great visuals and smooth gameplay, it's a must for fans.



Nekketsu Kōkō Dodgeball Bu: Soccer Hen / Nintendo World Cup

This *Kunio-kun* soccer spin-off was given the title Nintendo World Cup in US and Europe. Playing the soccer captain in a team of six players, you cannot control your team-mates, only give commands for them to follow.



Kunio-kun no Chō Nekketsu! Soccer League Plus World Hyper Cup Hen / River City Soccer Hooligans

This *Kunio-kun* soccer sequel added player-manager elements. Before matches you could the check weather report, fiddle with team formations and equip them with special items.



Nekketsu Volleyball Dayo Kunio-kun

The *Kunio* series tried its hand at volleyball with this Game Boy game, but *Nekketsu Volleyball Dayo Kunio-kun* never made it out of Japan. But we're not too upset as it wasn't a great jump from softball, and sadly wasn't as fun.



Ike Ike! Nekketsu Hockey

Planned to be released in the US as *Crash N' The Boys Ice Challenge*, *Nekketsu Hockey* sees the *Kunio-kun* kids hitting the ice for a cartoon ice hockey game. It's a fun sports game with plenty of the wacky humour and violence that the *Kunio-kun* series is famed for.



Downtown Nekketsu Baseball Monogatari

Considering how popular the sport is in the US and Japan, it's surprising that only the one *Kunio-kun* baseball game was released. Like previous games, it has slapstick violence and the action is wrapped up in a neat little story mode.



Kunio no Oden

This food-based Super Famicom puzzler has two distinct play modes: adjoin four and match three. There aren't really that many references to the *Kunio-kun* series, and in all honesty, it's pretty much just a generic puzzler that will only hold interest with fans of the series.

SUPER DODGE BALL SERIES



Nekketsu Kōkō Dodgeball Bu / Super Dodge Ball

Super Dodge Ball first appeared in arcades, but saw more fame on the NES. For its Western release, it was marketed as a standalone sports title. Like most Technos Nintendo ports, it has a few new features over the arcade version.



Kunio-Kun no Dodge Ball Da Yo: Zenin Shuugou

This was a Super Famicom sequel with similar looks and gameplay to the arcade and Famicom games, but with more customisation options and several noticeable improvements to the visuals. Another very enjoyable sports entry to the series.



Kunio no Nekketsu Dodgeball Densetsu / Super Dodge Ball (Neo Geo)

Appearing on a machine popular with fight fans, this Neo Geo exclusive plays more like a brawler. Teams are down to three, making the matches quicker. Players also share a health meter, and there are special moves.



Bakunetsu Dodgeball Fighters / Super Dodge Ball Advance

Developed by Million after Technos closed its doors in 1996, this sequel doesn't feature the *Kunio-kun* cast as the company failed to secure the rights in time. It therefore has this unusual art style. It was a launch title for the Game Boy Advance.



Chou Nekketsu Koko Kunio-kun Dodgeball Bu / Super Dodge Ball Brawlers

Both licence and familiar chunky art style returned for this sequel, which added shops to spend your winnings, and a neat mode that removes the court markings and allows free-for-all Softball.



Nekketsu Koukou Dodgeball Bu Kyouteki! Toukyuu Senshi no Maki

In 1991 Technos released a Game Boy version of the Famicom/NES game in Japan. It features all the usual modes, but despite a distinctive style, it sadly suffered from flickering and unresponsive controls.

Special thanks to Kurt Kalata and the excellent Hardcore Gaming 101 for their help with images





A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF DOOM

The Doom franchise is easily one of the most beloved and influential series in the history of videogaming. Sam Bandah picks up his Super Shotgun and braves each chapter of the saga to find out just why

There are some games that don't just define a genre, they define the industry too. They're perhaps not without precedent, often a refinement of what has gone before, but they almost always burst suddenly onto the scene, changing our perception of what videogames can and should be – and mapping out a path that developers will follow for years to come. If any single game, and franchise, perfectly fits that description it has to be *Doom*. When John Romero, Adrian Carmack, Tom Hall and John Carmack started creating *Doom* in 1992 they didn't realise they would change the gaming world forever, but it's hard to think of a series that has had a bigger impact.

Id Software's titanic shooter franchise not only shaped the first-person shooter genre, setting the standard for how enemy and level design should work in the FPS – which is still one of the most popular genres today – creating a template that would be endlessly copied, but also introduced us to core gaming concepts that we now take for granted, like deathmatch. Whether it was across a LAN network as you jeered at a friend on another machine after a bloody kill or even more impressively when you took down another player halfway across the world, the experience was unforgettable. It was a big part of what helped make *Doom* a cultural phenomenon, creating the concept of popular competitive gaming, and, with *Doom II*, the concept of mass modding and the formation of online gaming communities. One only need to look at the games regularly at the top of the current charts to see how important a part of gaming that still is.

Just as importantly, it's been a franchise dominated by the technical innovation and wizardry of John Carmack's engines. Perhaps more than any other series, *Doom* could arguably be pointed to as a major force that helped shape gamers' and the industry's obsession with ever-increasing graphical power. Droves of players upgraded from 386s to 486s in order to get the best performance to play their beloved *Doom* and *Doom II* – a process that rapidly gathered speed to become the basis of the computing and graphics card power arms race that defined PC gaming for a generation. *Doom 3* – thanks to the groundbreaking innovations in id tech 4 – can arguably be said to have helped kickstarted the age of the photo-realistic videogame.

But for all their historical significance, the *Doom* games are at heart simply great games to play, something that goes right back to the cool concept that frames them. "The core notion of fighting the forces of hell with a shotgun is perfect for a game," says John Carmack, id Software's legendary programmer. It's hard to disagree. "There should be no hint of moral qualm during play – you are fighting zombies and demons from hell. It is a righteous ass-kicking that you are delivering." We've delivered that ass-kicking in so many ways, and the series, while only three (odd) chapters long, has evolved in some wide-ranging ways. From our first bloody but almost epiphany-like kills in *Doom*, to the hard-fought and expertly managed slaughter of *Doom II*, through to the struggle to survive in the very different and realistically scary *Doom 3*, each *Doom* has been about the joy of combat, the shiver of fear and the elation of victory in battle. That didn't happen by accident, and each *Doom* is a videogame master class, full of clues as to how id Software made its magic.

Join us then as we once again run and gun through the twisted, demon-infested corridors of Mars, Earth and Hell itself, reliving those battles, and discovering just what made each game of the saga tick, on a journey back into the world of *Doom*.



» [PC] To this day it's possible to reel off a *Doom* reference like E1 M8 and have fans instantly know where it was – it this case their first hellish confrontation with the Barons of Hell.

DOOM (1993)



It often feels like *Doom* appeared from nowhere, like a gaming bolt from the blue, but it's worth remembering it wasn't even id Software's first 3D shooter.

Id had already established itself as a powerhouse in the nascent genre, releasing 1991's *Hover Tank One* and *Wolfenstein 3-D* in 1992 – *Doom* was simply a natural evolution. To hear John Carmack talk about it, it sounds like they knew before it started that *Doom* would be special. "We had already had two progressively larger hits with *Keen* and *Wolfenstein*, and everyone knew *Doom* was going to be on a completely different level, so I think we were prepared for it."

"The ideas for *Doom* began taking shape in November 1992," says John Romero, *Doom*'s famous level designer. "During the summer of 1992, John Carmack extended the *Wolfenstein 3-D* engine for the game *Shadowcaster*, which had slanted floors and different light levels. But the data structure for this engine was too limited for what we wanted to do with our next game." With id already striving to make better games through technology, it was a groundbreaking new Carmack engine that made *Doom* possible.

"The original *Doom* engine had three key advancements over what I did in *Wolfenstein 3-D*," explains Carmack. "Texture-mapped floors and ceilings, lighting effects, and the use of free form geometry instead of square tiles to build the worlds." It allowed the creation of walls of any angle, floors and ceilings of different heights with their own textures, and different light levels that could diminish as you looked forward. "That," remembers Romero, "set the visual tone for a game that could be spooky and dark."

Doom's technology was impressive, but it was how id used it to emotionally grab gamers that made the difference. Thanks to its engine, *Doom* was vivid, visceral and realistic enough for even non-gamers to get drawn into, finally gaining an understanding of why gamers were so fascinated by their beloved pixel drawn realities.

"Well, first there weren't many games that used first-person perspective so that was still pretty unique," explains Romero. "Really, the game just felt awesome moving in the world from that viewpoint."

Carmack famously claimed videogames needed story as much as porn did, so *Doom*'s narrative was fairly bare bones. You were a nameless Marine, exploring human research stations on Martian moons, Phobos and Deimos, battling demonic forces after secret teleportation experiments opened a gateway to hell. And this allowed the game's mechanics to speak for themselves. "We liked telling the story through the environment and situations you were in," says Romero, "and that style of game design worked great in *Half-Life* years later." It was surprisingly effective, and despite players having fought *Wolfenstein 3-D*'s Nazi troopers, their snarling dogs and even Mecha-



BEST WEAPON

BFG 9000

■ All the *Doom* weapons are iconic, but few more so than the BFG 9000. The Big F***ing Gun was tricky to master thanks to a micro-second pause between firing and discharging its monstrous green and white plasma ball, but horrific splash damage and a cone of random damage instantly killed almost any monster.

> "Everyone knew Doom was going to be on a completely different level, so I think we were prepared for it"



» [PC] Romero and Petersen mixed linear but fun puzzle-solving into *Doom*'s maps with great success.



» [PC] *Doom* was the game that introduced gamers to deathmatch for the first time, and the world has never been the same.





Hitler, *Doom*'s howling pace and bombastic sci-fi/horror setting took things to another level. "Placing the game in space allowed us to use futuristic weapons so you weren't limited to the weapons of World War II as we were with *Wolfenstein 3-D*," says Romero. "We thought that would make the game more fun."

Doom felt genuinely alive because its FPS play revolved around fighting seven highly imaginative demonic enemies that continually tested players' newly-forged twitch skills. You were never safe in *Doom*, constantly harassed by a variety of monsters. Whether it was the claws of Demons, the fiery blasts of Imps or the lightening balls of the Cacodemon, enemies were relentless at all ranges.

"We needed to have a balance of melee enemies and distance-attack enemies of varying strengths," Romero points out. "The AI was very simple: go to the player and attack." Enemy speed was purposely made slow so groups could advance on the player and be killed all at once. A 'fun twist' was added that made demons feel 'alive': they would furiously attack each other if the player could provoke them into hitting one another, allowing players to mop up the victor.

To deal with this horrific menagerie, players had a weapon set arguably yet to be topped in gaming. According to Romero, id experimented extensively but finally settled on fists, a chainsaw, a pistol, a shotgun, a chain gun, rocket launcher, the plasma gun, and the BFG 9000, a devastating one-hit-kill super weapon. When combined with the game's excellent system of health and armour pick-ups, and rare power-ups like the damage-multiplying Berserk, *Doom*'s iconic weapons gave players the edge they needed to beat back the forces of hell, if only barely at times. "We spent a bit of time balancing hit points, projectile damage across all weapons, and health," explains Romero, "so they all felt unique, impactful, but kept balance with each other."

Doom's distinct episodic levels, designed by Romero and Sandy Petersen, were often as imaginative as they were unforgiving, with players navigating hazards like lakes of radioactive sludge or lava while solving puzzles around teleporters, lifts or finding coloured keys that opened doors – which surprisingly didn't break *Doom*'s frenetic pace.

"That was easy," claims Romero, "we put enemies all over the place guarding keys and doors. I also liked to make the player backtrack over an area they had been to, and cleared out, so I could have even more enemies come out and wait for them." Those tricks, an often bowel-quaking use of sound and Bobby Prince's metal in the soundtrack all introduced gamers to something they'd not previously experienced in games – genuine fear, and they never knew what was coming next.



"Having the Barons of Hell at the end of the first episode was pretty neat, and unexpected from a player perspective," explains Romero of how boss battles were used to spice up the action with unique and intimidating encounters. "The Cyberdemon was scary when you heard the thumping of his hooves and then faced his deadly rockets," he says, "and the Spiderdemon with the fast chaingun was the boss you really needed to actually hide from."

Doom was unlike anything gamers had seen before, and the release of a shareware version contributed to its emergence as the first modern blockbuster. But what really drove the *Doom* explosion was multiplayer. "From the first day of development, we knew multiplayer was going to be the next big leap in our kind of high-speed FPS," claims Romero of *Doom*'s co-op. "The image of two players attacking demons with rocket launchers and plasma guns really got me excited since I'd never seen anything like it before." But even that was quickly overshadowed by one of *Doom*'s biggest innovations: deathmatch.

"Deathmatching took the game to a level that no other game had achieved," agrees Romero. "There had been older games where players could fight each other, but nothing on the scale of *Doom*." Deathmatch helped make *Doom* a cultural phenomenon, sparking the origins of competitive, then professional gaming online.

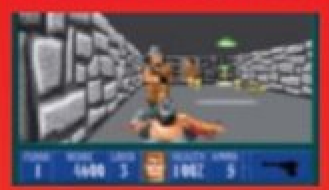
Doom had a huge influence upon gaming as a whole as it paved the way with new technology, and refined the fledging FPS in a way that would inspire myriad ports and clones. It also introduced the world to truly competitive gaming with online deathmatch, which still drives the industry today. It was an impressive opening chapter, but this was just the beginning...



» [PC] The original *Doom* was all the things Nineties gamers loved about videogames - high-tech, fast-paced, loud and openly rebellious.

DOOMED INSPIRATION

FIVE THINGS THAT INSPIRED THE CREATION OF DOOM



WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (1992)
■ The revolutionary 3D Nazi shooter that saw id create both the technical and gameplay templates that would form the basis for *Doom*.

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS (1974)
■ The id team were huge tabletop *D&D* aficionados and one of their campaigns ended with a demon invasion of the world, directly inspiring *Doom*.

SHADOWCASTER (1993)
■ Raven Software s engaging FPS/RPG hybrid about an avenging shapeshifter used an engine that Carmack created and would develop further for *Doom*.



PAC MAN (1980)
■ Interestingly, John Romero has said the circular dot-munching hero served as an inspiration for the frantic corridor-based action of *Doom*.

ALIENS (1986)
■ Id had been talking to 20th Century Fox about creating an *Aliens* game but ended up crafting its own tale of a Space Marine battling horrific odds.



BEST BOSS
SPIDER MASTERMIND

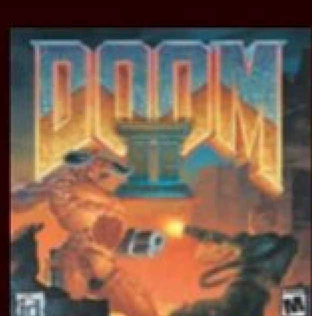
There were few *Doom* bosses more terrifying to face off against than the maniacal Spider Mastermind. A living brain with a leering face mounted upon a cybernetic chassis with six mechanical legs, it sports a devastating chain-gun that can simply rip unwary players apart. Being forced to flee while ensuring you got direct hits on the beast – it was immune to splash damage – often made this battle a thrilling game of chase that could only end in blood.



[PC] *Doom*'s world felt alive because its ferocious monsters seemed self aware, to the point where you can trick them into battling each other.



DOOM II: HELL ON EARTH (1994)



D*oom* had been such a hit and so revolutionary it was always going to be a tough act to follow, but the ever-confident id knew it had a magic formula.

"We weren't thinking about gamers' expectations," claims Romero, "we were thinking about what we wanted to add to the game to make it better." That 'If it ain't broke don't fix it' attitude was mirrored on *Doom II*'s technical side. "*Doom II* was nearly identical to *Doom* from a technical standpoint," confirms Carmack. "The only changes were relatively simple tweaks and generalisations in the game logic for the new monsters and environmental effects."

While others might have been tempted to change the formula for this second iteration, id carefully preserved what worked. "We knew we weren't going to change much in the core mechanics of the game," Romero stresses.

But that conservative stance didn't mean *Doom II* wasn't even more epic than *Doom*. For starters, it shifted the action from the moons of Mars back to Earth, with the player in the boots of the nameless Marine coming home to find it too has been overrun by hell's forces. "We used the same design model as *Commander Keen*: player is away from home killing bad guys, bad guys go to Earth instead, then player goes to Earth to kill the bad guys," reveals Romero.

The core focus in *Doom II* was on making better levels, a task that both Romero and Petersen approached with gusto. Levels were far less linear, often offering multiple routes to the exit, with more opportunities to explore for ammo, health, armour and power-ups like the new health and armour-boosting Megasphere. "We wanted to let the player feel like they could choose to go any number of ways and explore the levels, and figure out the puzzles (which *are* linear)", Romero explains, "That *feeling* of freedom of exploration is really important to a player feeling like they're in control of their experience, and not on a track through the level."

The shifting of the action to Earth gave id the chance to be a little more imaginative with *Doom II*'s locations, and clever levels riffing on particular environmental elements like barrels, lifts or teleporters appeared. That ability to chart your own path, finding much-needed supplies or avoiding certain foes was important, because in addition to crafting smarter levels, id had evolved *Doom*'s macabre menagerie, filling gaps in the roles that hadn't been quite covered by the original eight monsters with (eventually by *Final Doom* in 1995) eight new nasties.

"We kept the same idea of balancing melee and ranged-attack enemies, but wanted to add some new abilities the player wouldn't expect," Romero says. "The Revenant's mouth-punch and guided rockets were a surprise, the Arch-Vile's resurrections and BFG attacks were dangerous, and the Pain Elemental's spawning of Lost Souls was very tough."

The Mancubus, he jokes, was created just to be a huge blob on legs shooting fireballs from massive arms, while the Pain Elemental was a more dangerous upgrade of Romero's personal favourite monster, the Cacodemon. Everything was scaled up, and that included monster numbers and the inevitable monster in-fighting that followed – it's hard to forget classic *Doom II* moments with the games most powerful monsters, like the Cyberdemon and Spider Mastermind



BEST WEAPON

Super Shotgun

■ *Doom II* introduced the double-barrelled Super Shotgun, which sported even more visceral stopping power than the original in *Doom* and was fantastic for demonic crowd control. Its resounding boom followed by an intensely satisfying clack-clack sound, and the brilliant hand animation as you frantically re-chambered more shells, quickly made it a fan favourite.

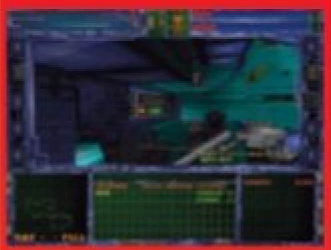


[PC] Facing off against even a single powerful monster like a Hell Knight could be a challenge if your health was low.

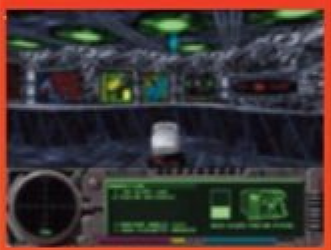


THE ROAD TO HELL

FIVE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO DOOM!



SYSTEM SHOCK
[1994] PC
■ The stylish spiritual father to the *BioShock* series, *System Shock* was a unique blend of FPS and RPG sci-fi action.



MARATHON
[1994] MAC
■ The now famous Bungie wowed Mac gamers of the day with *Marathon*, a slick 3D shooter with surprisingly deep sci-fi lore.

HERETIC [1994] PC
■ A dark fantasy first-person shooter created with a modified version of the *Doom* engine that stood out thanks to great level design and an emphasis on exploration.



ALIENS VS PREDATOR
[1994] ATARI JAGUAR
■ With its distinct Alien, Predator and Marine FPS campaigns, *Aliens Vs Predator* was easily one of the best games on the Atari Jaguar.

ZERO TOLERANCE
[1994] MEGA DRIVE
■ While technically limited by the Mega Drive, *Zero Tolerance* was a slick console *Doom* clone that ran smoother than many console conversions of *Doom* itself.





BEST BOSS

THE ICON OF SIN

A personal favourite of John Romero's, *Doom II*'s final boss, The Icon of Sin, is a horrendous giant bio-mechanical goat's head on a wall that endlessly vomits out attacking demons from a surgically opened brain cavity. Its only weak spot, the severed screaming head of Romero himself, is tucked away deep behind its demonic visage – it can only be damaged by rockets fired from certain angles on the multi-tiered stage as you battle to survive the demonic onslaught.

battling to the death. *Doom II* also introduced a tough new boss final boss. "The Icon of Sin was just a purely evil, seemingly-indestructible wall," says Romero of this classic addition, "and killing it was very difficult, you had to do it as fast as possible."

Despite more enemies, only one new weapon was added in *Doom II*: the Super Shotgun. "We decided not to break the formula, and the shotgun was the most popular weapon, so we made it even better," argues Romero. "The balance was really perfect with the guns, and we didn't want to ruin that by introducing a bunch of new ones." It was a wise decision, with the double-barrelled shotgun revealing itself as one of the franchise's best weapons and an instantly recognisable series icon.

It'd be easy to call *Doom II* simple iteration but its design choices, like *Doom*'s, were echoed throughout the industry. "I'm proud of the way we held back and only improved in areas that we knew wouldn't break the magic balance we had achieved with *Doom*," confirms Romero. But perhaps even more importantly, *Doom II* marked the point by which id's open source approach had started to bear fruit, with literally thousands of modders now releasing maps and WAD files for both games that let them populate *Doom*'s world with whatever they fancied. That, with co-op and deathmatch – now fully online and supporting up to four players respectively – had helped to forge a community unlike that in any previous game. The *Doom* games inspired a generation and many modern developers, like id's current creative director Tim Willits, cut their teeth as *Doom II* modders before entering the industry.

With such success, many expected *Doom III* to quickly appear, but id was keen to move onto *Quake*, and it would use the community platform *Doom II* had helped establish to great effect in its new franchise. It would still support the release of *Ultimate Doom* in 1995 and *Final Doom* in 1995, but the shift to *Quake* – and changes within id itself as Romero moved on – meant almost ten years would pass before *Doom 3* appeared, and it would be a very different beast...



» [PC] Both *Doom* and *Doom II* were designed to make you feel powerful as you fended off clustered groups of enemies.



» [PC] *Doom II*'s new monsters, like the Revenant, gave *Doom II*'s developers even more ways to bring players pain.

> "We weren't thinking about gamers' expectations, we were thinking about what we wanted to add to make it better"





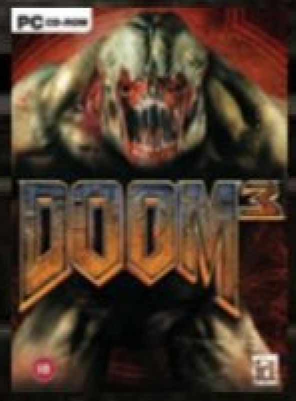




» [PC] Thanks to id tech 4, *Doom 3* was gruesomely gorgeous, it really brought *Doom*'s monsters to life.



DOOM 3 (2004)



It had been almost ten years since the last *Doom* game but, with typical confidence, id Software set out to reclaim its shooter crown with *Doom 3* in 2004, bringing everything it had learned in the interim. "There was this little thing called the *Quake* franchise that occupied a lot of our time between *Doom II* and *Doom 3*," chuckles Tim Willits, id's creative director and *Doom 3*'s director. "We made three great games but after *Quake 3*, we all felt it was time to return to *Doom*. For me, *Doom* was the game that inspired me to go into the videogame industry and working on *Doom 3* was a dream come true." While the decision to make *Doom 3* – a re-imagining of *Doom* – caused an 'internal spat' within id, once the dust settled it would once again be technology driving a *Doom* title. Carmack's revolutionary id tech 4 brought a whole new level of graphical fidelity to gaming.

It featured unified lighting and shadows, enabled complex animation and scripting, interactive GUI surfaces, bump mapping and fully dynamic per-pixel lighting: all elements that wrought a stunning transformation to *Doom*'s various creatures, weapons and environments in *Doom 3*, giving them a frightening level of hyper-reality. Even by today's standards *Doom 3* is still an impressive game.

"Technology in general hasn't changed as much as you would think," explains Willits. "What has changed a lot in the last eight years is game design." But at the time, much of what id did in *Doom 3* was considered cutting edge. Ironically, the deep narrative approach Carmack had so vehemently rejected for *Doom* defined *Doom 3*. id brought in Matthew J. Costello, the sci-fi writer behind *The 7th Guest*, to create a deeper narrative, showcased in elaborate and cinematic cut-scenes, to flesh out the tale of the nameless Marine battling evil on the face of Mars. Players now had an antagonist, the twisted scientist Dr. Betruger, and the battle against Hell revealed details about the destroyed Martian civilisation.

Once again *Doom*'s monster ecosystem evolved as id brought back familiar ugly faces, many with new abilities, like Imps, Arch-Viles, Demons and Hell Knights, and introduced a whole host of new nasties, like the disturbing winged Cherubs, the swarming Ticks and various horrible new Zombies. Due to a reduction in player



» [PS3] *Doom 3 BFG Edition* marks the first time that the game's content (which includes *Doom* and *Doom II*) has appeared on PS3.

BEST BOSS

CYBERDEMON

***Doom 3*'s gigantic Cyberdemon clambers out of the gaping hell hole at the Primary Evacuation site and can only be harmed by the Martian Soul Cube. But getting the four necessary kill shots isn't easy as you battle swarms of lesser demons spewed up by the pit, while dodging its rocket attacks and one-hit-kill stomp attack. But it's uber-satisfying watching the last Soul Cube attack bring the massive final boss down before burrowing into its brain and sealing the gateway to hell.**



» [PC] *Doom 3* was more about a sense of dread and fear as monsters stalked you from the darkness.

"Doom was the game that inspired me to go into the videogame industry. Working on Doom 3 was a dream come true"

speed, many of these demons could more easily get at players, who now had to pick their way through the darkness, methodically taking out enemies or risking gruesome death.

Doom 3's levels were designed to increase that tension, making players feel trapped and alone, an atmosphere greatly enhanced by id tech 4's realistic lighting, which packed its environments with monster-filled shadows. But few things were more graphically impressive than *Doom 3*'s boss monsters, like the huge reptilian Guardian, terrifying half demon, half tank Sabaoth and the most impressive rendition imaginable of *Doom*'s Cyberdemon. These fast-paced, open area encounters provided a marked contrast to the creepy corridor-based play.

With players more vulnerable, id balanced the scales with a high tech reinterpretation of *Doom*'s classic weapon set and new tools including a machine gun, grenades and the Martian Soul Cube, a powerful one-hit-kill weapon that drained its victim's health. Weapons were more powerful but that was offset by the game's Flashlight mechanic, which forced players to choose between being able to see dangers in the dark, or being able to quickly kill them. It all made *Doom 3* a scary experience more akin to a survival horror title.

But while few failed to be impressed by *Doom 3*'s incredible technical acumen and visuals, not everyone was quite as enamoured of its more methodical survival horror. Some felt that *Doom 3*'s Flashlight mechanic along with the monster closets, graphically hidden boxes that monsters suddenly sprang from, broke the realistic sense of immersion. Romero, who had left id long before *Doom 3*, was one of them.

"I didn't like the predictable and repetitive nature of the monster closets," he admits. "The engine was pretty cool, though." While some loved these new mechanics, for others *Doom 3* felt caught between two worlds, tapping directly into the undercurrent of fear that *Doom* had always used, but due to its slow pace was unable able to let players feel powerful. But id was well aware of these tensions. "Even internally we had two camps of people," Willits admits of the Flashlight, pointing out that the mechanic will change for the upcoming *Doom 3* re-release in the *Doom 3 BFG Edition*.

"In the original game, we were limited by the number of dynamic active lights in a scene, and allowing the player to always use the Flashlight led to performance issues. Now that we have more powerful systems this isn't as much of a problem. Plus, we feel that using the Flashlight with the gun is really the best way to experience the game. It doesn't make the game any less scary in my opinion, it just makes it less frustrating because no one likes getting lost in the dark."

Despite those issues, *Doom 3* went on to become id Software's best selling game, and a favourite of many hardcore fans, but the *BFG Edition* promises to let those who didn't quite enjoy *Doom 3* as much as they might have revisit this classic that so many gamers love. "The great thing about *BFG* is that we've taken an old-school shooter that was a ton of fun and enhanced it to make it comfortable in the hands of modern gamers," promises Willits, "who are going to experience something different, something they may have never expected."

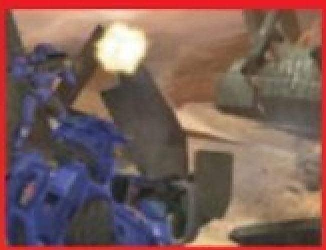
Carmack is also very happy with the new *BFG Edition* of *Doom 3*, as he tells us. "As always, the devil is in the details, and it turned into a lot more work than expected. It turned out great, though – in addition to the 60 fps gameplay and stereoscopic display options, the game got a lot more fun to play, with more generous ammo placement throughout the levels and the off-hand flashlight behaviour. I'm very pleased with it."

So surely, now this *BFG Edition* is out the way, we can expect the long overdue *Doom 4*? "It will be in your hands when it's done," laughs Willits. It's difficult to wait, but it's a sure bet that when *Doom* comes around again, it'll once again raise the bar within its genre, transporting gamers to a hellish but engrossing world that reminds them of all the reasons they love videogames. Just like you, we can hardly wait.



» [Xbox 360] *Doom 3 BFG Edition* includes brand new content and HD-remastered and 3D versions of *Doom 3* and *Resurrection Of Evil*.

FURTHER BLEEDING
THE FIGHT FOR THE FPS THRONE



HALO 2 (2004)
■ The Master Chief's multiplayer-driven second outing in *Halo 2* introduced console players to the full online shooter experience and started the Xbox Live explosion.



HALF-LIFE 2 (2004)
■ *Doom 3* upped the narrative stakes in the franchise, but it would be difficult to compete with the superlative *Half-Life 2* from Valve, still considered the benchmark for narrative shooters.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 4 (2004)
■ While *Doom 3* launched with relatively modest multiplayer, *Unreal Tournament 4* was taking the online PC shooter craze that *Doom* had started to new heights.

FAR CRY (2004)
■ Gamers were treated to yet another graphical powerhouse with deep gunplay that year in the gorgeous *Far Cry* from Crytek Studios.

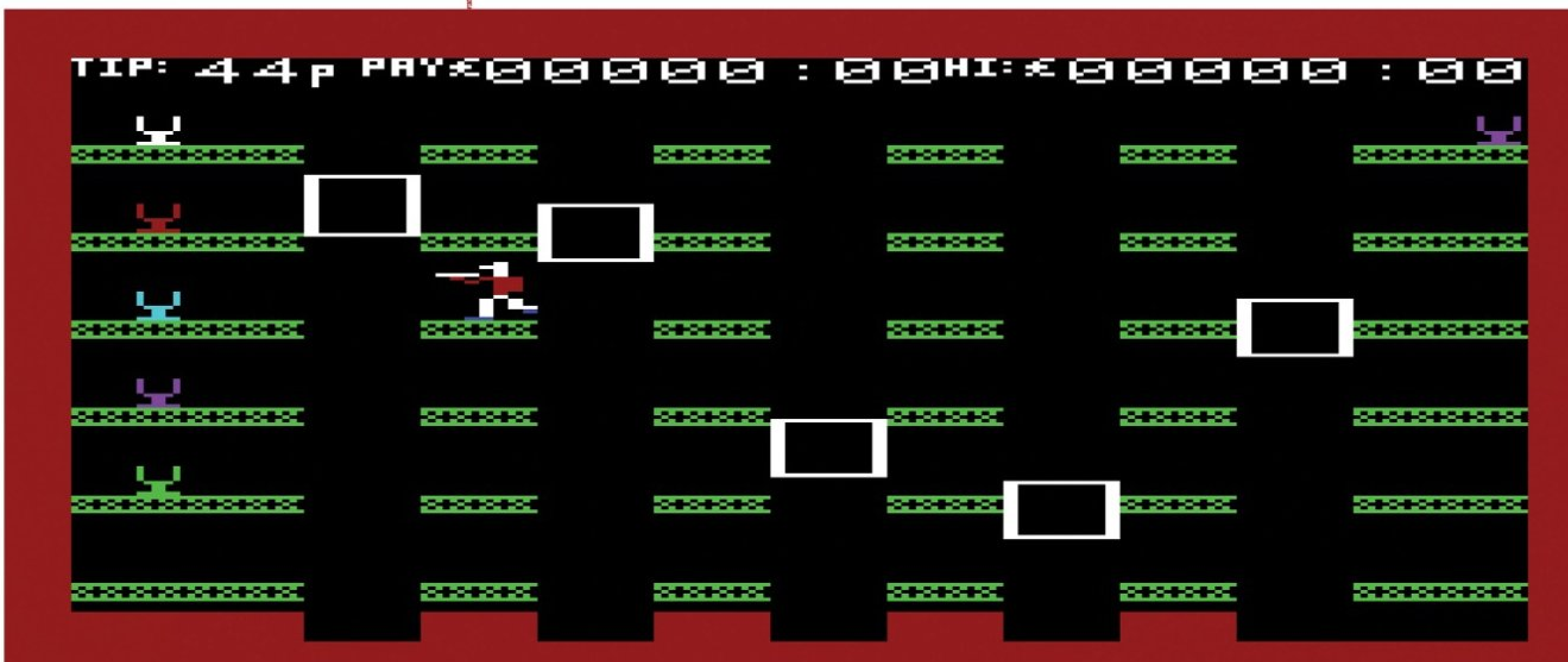
PAINKILLER (2004)
■ The spirit of the original *Doom* was still very much alive as players battled the forces of hell through purgatory in this adrenaline-filled twitch shooter.



BEST WEAPON
Martian Soul Cube

The powerful Martian Soul Cube was forged from the souls of the Martian race who had previously fallen to hell and was powered by getting five kills, whereupon it cried out to be used. It could be fired it off as a whirl of floating blades that instantly killed almost any foe and transferred life force directly to the player.

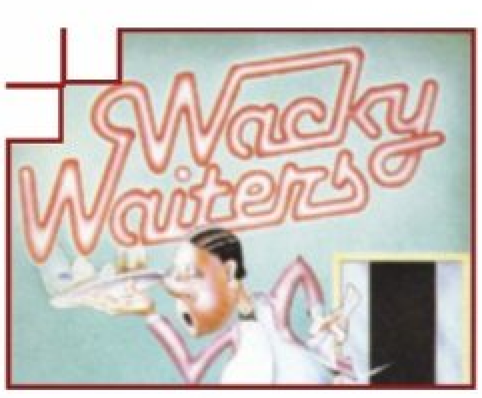
THE MAKING OF



» [Commodore Vic-20] We spent ages as a kid appreciating the hypnotic undulating of the lifts. We should have gone out more.

Wacky Waiters

Before he was splashed all over the tabloids as the proverbial teenage whizzkid programmer, Eugene Evans turned the humble Vic-20 into the weirdest restaurant around. Paul Drury spills his pint



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** IMAGINE SOFTWARE

» **DEVELOPER:** EUGENE EVANS

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **PLATFORM:** COMMODORE VIC-20

» **GENRE:** SERVE-'EM-UP



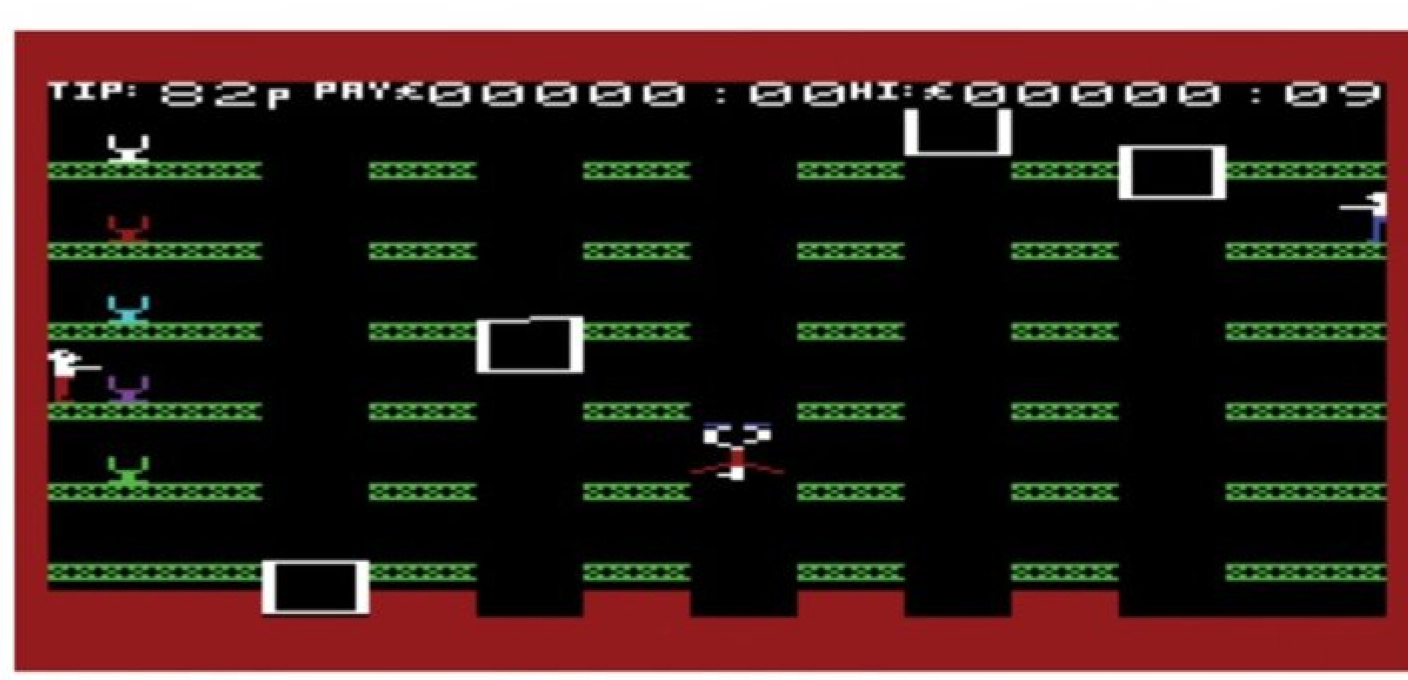
"This is so scary to look at it," laughs Eugene Evans. "I always point out to people that this game fits in less memory than a windows icon on your desktop, so give me a break!"

We're showing Eugene a gameplay video of *Wacky Waiters* for the unexpanded Vic-20 and he's smiling affectionately and shaking his head apologetically in equal measure. We've managed to intercept him at Victoria train station in London, en route from his Virginian home in the United States to a guest speaker slot at this year's Develop conference in Brighton, and are keen to discover what possessed him to make an accident-prone wine waiter the star of his first title for Imagine Software."It was just this crazy idea we had when we were down at the Barbican for the Personal Computer World Show," he explains. "We were watching the elevators go up and down and it was kind of like *Frogger* on its side. That's how it came about."

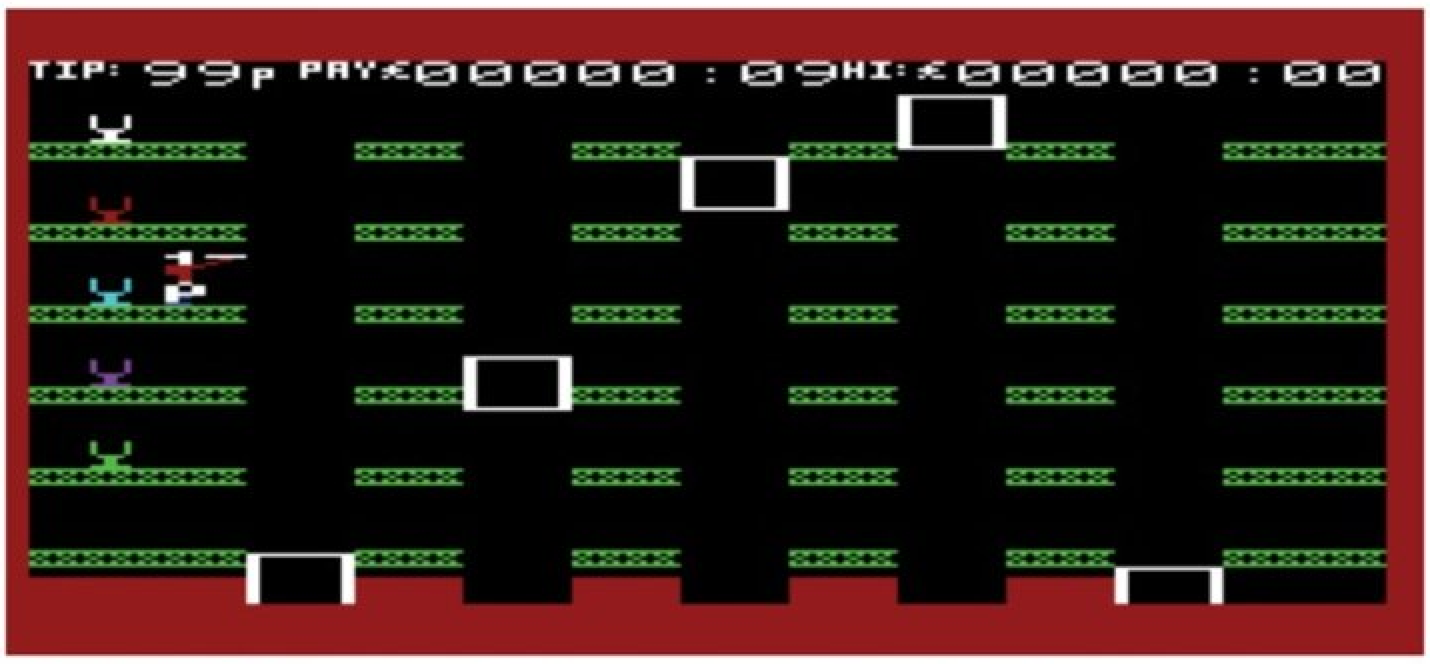
So the teenage Eugene, less than a year after leaving school at sixteen, returned to Imagine's Liverpool base and coded his quirky and compulsive restaurant-based drama over the next few months. *Wacky Waiters* was a simple, single-screen affair, which entailed an over-worked and under-protected waiter traversing a set of fast-moving lifts, taking orders from impatient diners and serving drinks under the reproachful eye of an unforgiving boss. Mistime a step and you plummet to your death down an open elevator shaft but dally too long and your already miserly tip, which makes up your score, ticks down to nothing. It was a demanding job, made all the more challenging by being allocated a solitary life to complete your shift.

"I only gave you one life?" asks Eugene in disbelief. "That's very sad. That's brutal. What the hell was I thinking!"

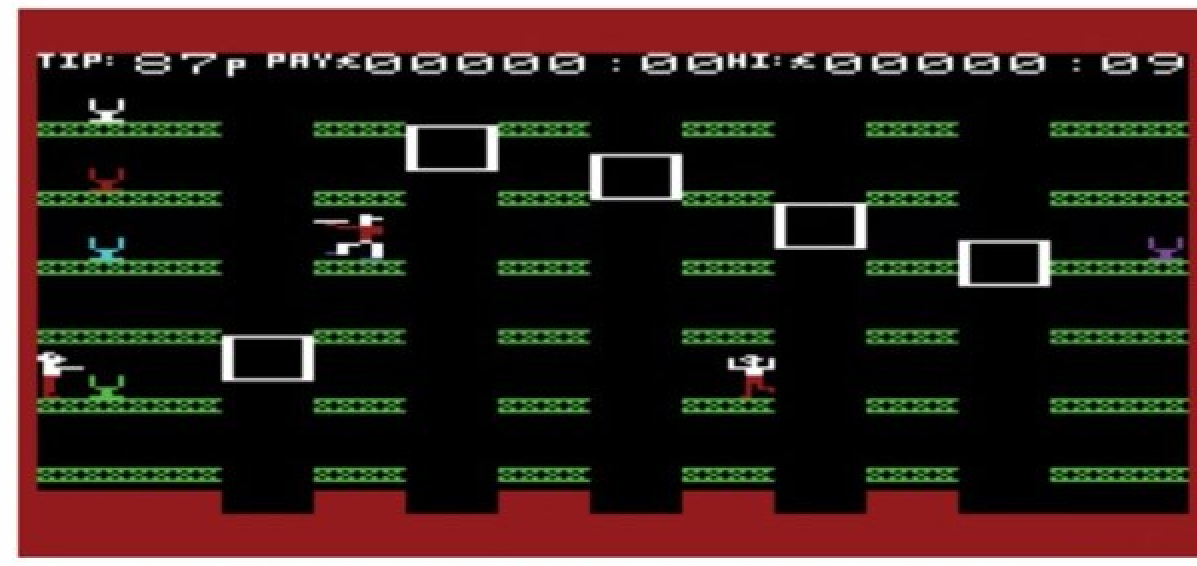
Eugene proceeds to apologise for the punitive difficulty of the game but then the rules were different back then. In fact, they were still being written. Having begun his coding career at Bug Byte software, producing *Vic Panic*,



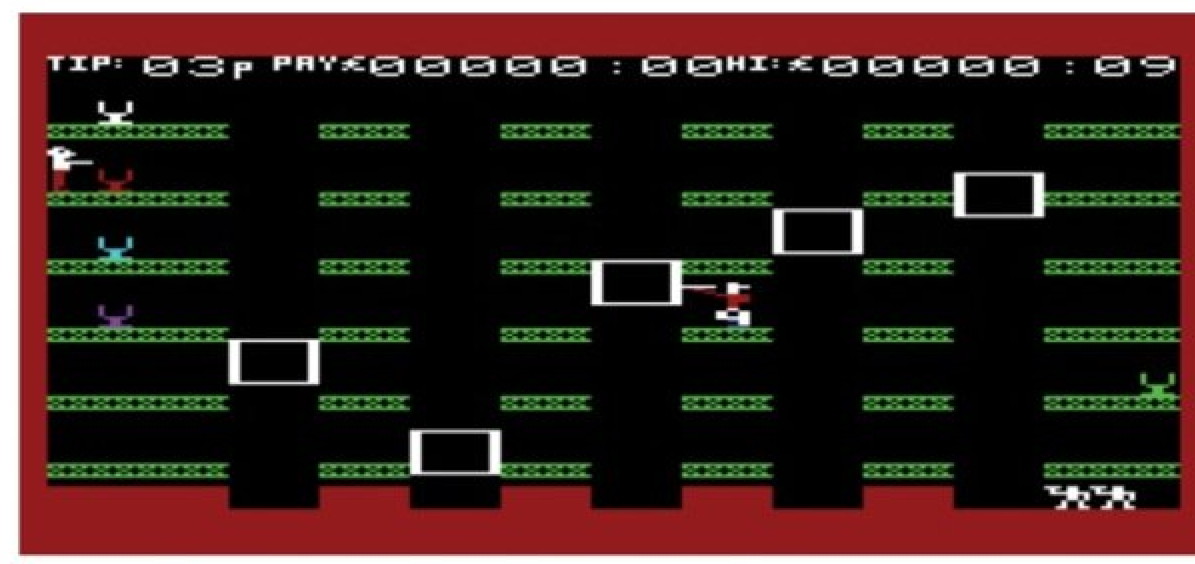
» [Commodore Vic-20] Had an accident at work? Where there's blame, there's a claim…



» [Commodore Vic-20] All that work for a 9p tip? We know it was Liverpool in the Eighties but that is harsh…



» [Commodore Vic-20] Take too long serving drinks and drunken diners pursue you mercilessly.



» [Commodore Vic-20] Stumble three times getting into a lift and you're fired.

a commendable clone of Universal's 'bury-'em-up' arcade hit *Space Panic*, he left to become Imagine's first employee. He joined former Bug Byte colleagues Dave Lawson and Mark Butler at the new venture and they resolved not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

"One of the things we tried to commit to at Imagine was doing original games," he explains with some pride. "At Bug Byte, we had gotten slapped for doing arcade copies. Atari were going to launch Atarisoft and were going around the States suing anyone who copied their games. We got a cease and desist order to stop selling *Vic-Men*, [a *Pac-Man* clone written by Dave Lawson]. To my knowledge, we were the only company in the UK to get one of those! We were told to take it off the market and ship them all the copies, which we did. It kind of brought it home that this was only going to get worse."

Thus Eugene and the Imagine boys tried to create unique games with a distinctive look and feel, a brand identity even, both on and off screen. *Wacky Waiters*' unusual setting helped distinguish it from the slew of space shooters on the market and Eugene managed to cram a good deal of personality into its unlikely hero, especially given the restricted palette the Vic offered. You really could sense the precarious position of the cocktails balanced on your tray and winced whenever you hurtled headfirst down an empty lift shaft.

"Given the limited number of pixels, using the 'infinite monkeys' principle, eventually you're going to get something good," chuckles Eugene, modestly. "One of the really good things about the UK back then was how much original work was being done. The proliferation of all these little character games, these crazy games people were coming out with…"

Things indeed got crazy at Imagine. The company became synonymous with success and excess before its very public meltdown in 1984 and Eugene was right in the thick of it. Thanks to Imagine's marketing and PR guru Bruce Everiss, Eugene was presented as the archetypal 'teenage whizzkid', whose bedroom coding skills had led to fame and fortune. "I was doing pretty well but I'll be honest and say not as well as we publicised," he confesses. "Bruce's moment of genius was thinking big. He said we needed to pursue the cult of personality. I believe it was his cousin who ran a PR firm and she said we should spin up a story about this successful teenage programmer. I don't think we ever quite realised how big it would get. That story went everywhere. I even ended up visiting Downing Street…"

As Eugene's train pulls in, there's just time for him to sign our copy of *Wacky Waiters*. As he scrawls across the glossy, professionally produced foldout cassette inlay, another indication that Imagine meant business, we blurt out what an important figure he was in our formative years. He was a ginger-haired, bespectacled computer nerd, just like us, yet he was living the dream of flash cars and wads of cash. He gave us hope. He was our poster boy.

He looks up and smiles. "One of the things that makes me feel good about that period, because there was a lot of pain too, is the number of people that tell me, 'Your story helped me persuade my parents that I could make a living out of computer games'."

Next issue, we put Eugene in the chair and find out about his early days at Bug Byte, his tumultuous time at Imagine Software and discover tantalising details of the unreleased C64 Megagame *Psyclapse*.

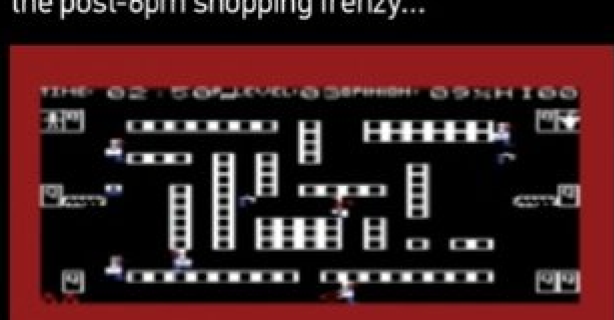
Thanks to Steve Benway for the *Wacky Waiters* video.

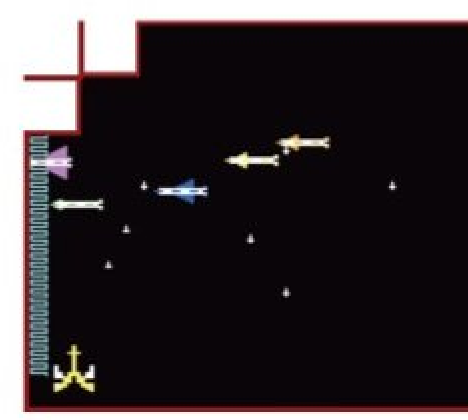
"One of the really good things about the UK back then was how much original work was being done, these crazy games people were coming out with"

EUGENE KEPT THE ECCENTRIC BRITISH END UP

YOU'RE NICKED…

EUGENE'S THIRD AND final game for the Commodore's Vic-20 was *Catcha Snatcha*, released in 1983. It placed another unlikely profession centre stage as you took on the role of a store detective, apprehending shoplifters, locating lost children and keeping the aisles clear of everything from umbrellas to parcel bombs. Was Eugene drawing on his experience working in Bruce Everiss' Microdigital computer shop as a kid, we wonder? "Don't read too much into that," he laughs. "The game was somewhat reminiscent of *Pac-Man*. We didn't want to rip off that game directly, but by putting a character in a maze, chasing or chased by another set of characters, we wanted to capture some of what worked with *Pac-Man*. I don't think we achieved that, but that was the thinking!" It's an ambitious if occasionally confusing title, worth revisiting to see the unexpanded Vic being seriously pushed and to experience the madness of the post-6pm shopping frenzy…





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

VIC PANIC
SYSTEMS: VIC-20
YEAR: 1982

ARCADIA 64 (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: C64
YEAR: 1983

BRATTACUS
SYSTEMS: AMIGA
YEAR: 1986

GAMING LEGENDS

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

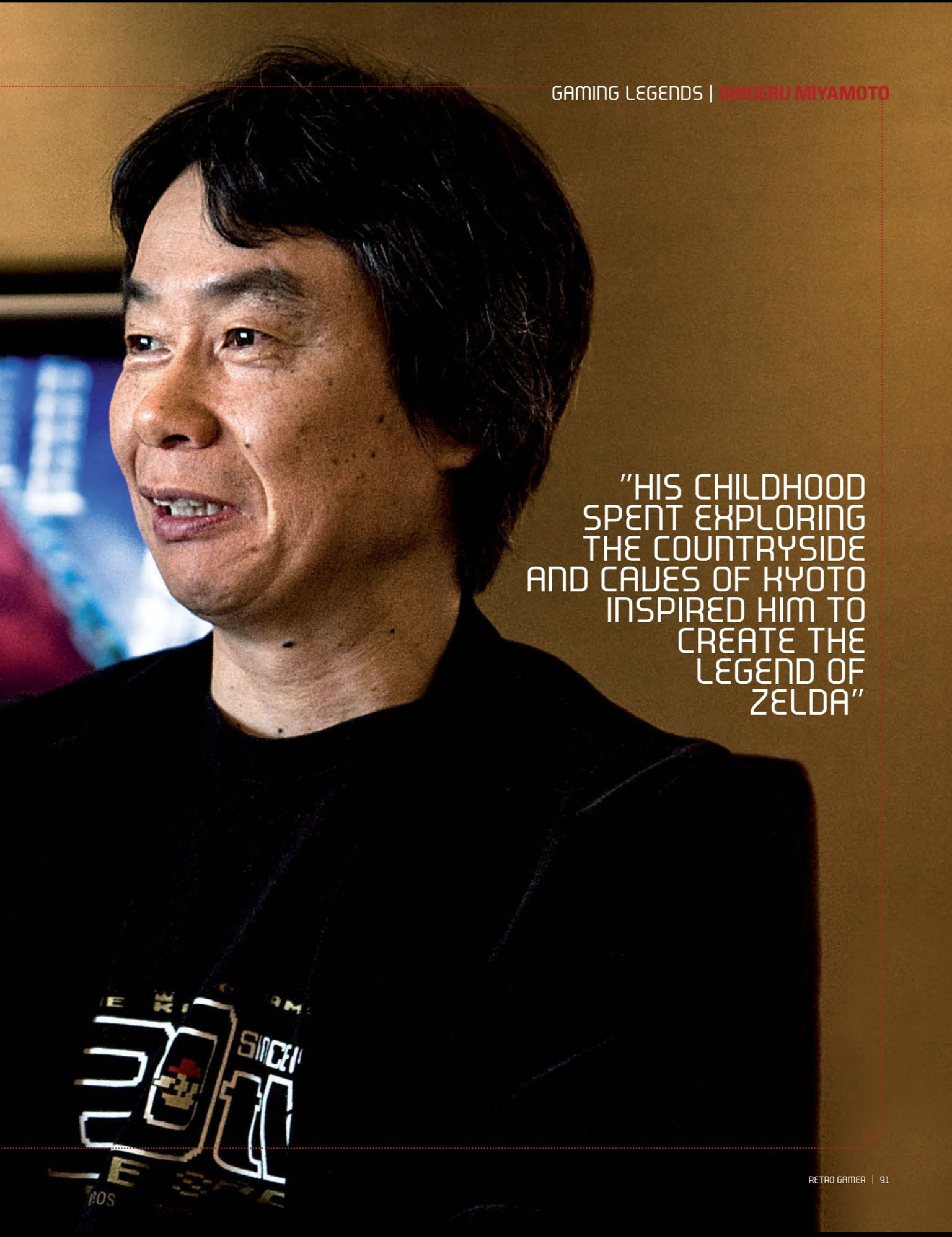
In the first of a new regular series, Ashley Day looks back at the work of one of the most celebrated figures in videogames and attempts the impossible, to summarise his achievements and importance in just a few pages



It's often said that the games industry suffers because it doesn't have its celebrities. No rockstar personalities making tabloid headlines, no superstars who can plug their latest project in the mainstream press. But perhaps it doesn't need them. In many ways, videogames are more like literature and their creators like novelists. To many who consume the best games, the people behind them are invisible and it's the entertainment itself that matters. The player and the game have a direct relationship, almost completely divorced from the context in which the game was made and who it was made by. The games speak for themselves. But that's not to say those games aren't made by some truly remarkable people. And few game creators, if any, are more worthy of remark than Shigeru Miyamoto.

About as far removed from the 'rockstar developer' cliché as it's possible to get, Miyamoto is a softly spoken and always professional member of the games industry. He doesn't mouth off on Twitter, rarely talks about his competitors during interviews and has a way of communicating that's equal parts friendly and thoughtful. A private family man, thrust into the games industry limelight because of his influential work, he remains something of a mystery. We know very little about Shigeru Miyamoto the man, but his games tell us much about Shigeru Miyamoto the artist.

Like many game creators of his generation, Miyamoto didn't have the option of studying game design during his college years, and even computer science was very much in its infancy during his youth. Instead, his training was in industrial arts and his ambition was to become a comic book artist. His skill for game design, then, came not from formal training but from something in his personality because, for Miyamoto, life itself is a game. We've all heard how Miyamoto's childhood spent exploring the countryside and caves of Kyoto inspired him to create the grand adventure of *The Legend Of Zelda* and even as recently as last year the 59-year-old has been seen walking around the Nintendo offices with a tape



"HIS CHILDHOOD SPENT EXPLORING THE COUNTRYSIDE AND CAVES OF KYOTO INSPIRED HIM TO CREATE THE LEGEND OF ZELDA"





■ [N64] With *Super Mario 64*, Miyamoto and his team perfected platforming in 3D. Two years later they did the same for adventure games with *Ocarina Of Time*.

■ [NES] Miyamoto's love of play and exploration manifested in *The Legend Of Zelda* and remained at the core of the series for over 25 years.





■ In *Pikmin*, Miyamoto achieved what many thought impossible, he made the real-time strategy genre playful, colourful and happy.

measure, amusing himself by trying to guess the length of everyday objects.

This playful spirit transplants perfectly into Shigeru Miyamoto's defining title: *Super Mario Bros*. On a surface level, this platform game is important because it practically established the rules of the genre and catapulted an early Nintendo star into such fame that he became the Mickey Mouse of videogames: not just a mascot for Nintendo but an ambassador for the medium itself. But *Super Mario Bros* remains an eminently playable game not because it defined the rules but because it also dared to subvert them within the same game.

Super Mario Bros encouraged and rewarded playfulness and experimentation more than any other game of its time, and World 1-2 is a great testament to this. Filled with secrets, from coin blocks that appear out of nowhere, to that iconic shortcut across the top part of the screen seemingly reserved only for score data, *Super Mario Bros* keyed into the interactive nature of games to make you feel so in control that you could even break the rules.

Mario wasn't a one-off either. *The Legend Of Zelda* similarly rewarded imaginative, creative, inquisitive play, allowing players to discover all kinds of secrets if they were prepared to try new things like burning a bush or pushing a gravestone. This is the essence of Miyamoto's input and has come to define Nintendo gaming for three decades. How many of us have stood in a seemingly innocuous part of a new *Mario* or *Zelda* game and thought "I wonder what will happen if…" only to try it and discover that not only was such an idea possible but the designers had anticipated the experiment and left a secret in reward for such bold thinking? That's the Nintendo difference, and it largely comes from Miyamoto.

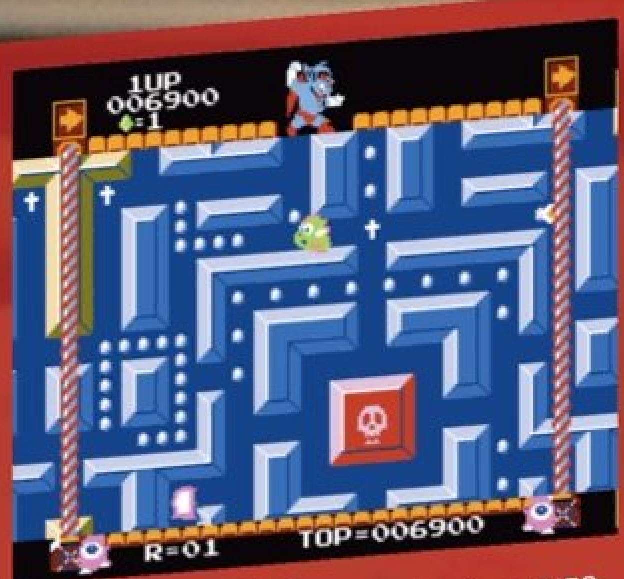
Of course, not all of Nintendo's achievements can be credited to one man. The company had existed a good ninety years before Miyamoto joined its ranks and its success came from a wide number of individuals, not least the ruthless business acumen of the Yamauchi family, the innovative hardware designs of Gunpei Yokoi, the pioneering spirit of Nintendo Of America's NES launch team or, more recently, the guiding hand of the creatively-minded Satoru Iwata. But throughout Nintendo's videogame career, Miyamoto has been a constant source of fortune.

Though Nintendo joined the videogame business in the mid-Seventies, its earliest arcade games ranged from middling success to absolute disaster, culminating in *Radar Scope*, a primitive *Space Invaders* derivative that did okay in Japan but tanked in America when it launched there in 1980, appearing outdated and unimaginative compared to its contemporaries. Facing the prospect of a massive financial disaster, Nintendo Of America appealed to the Japanese office to put a new game inside the *Radar Scope* cabinets, and a fresh-faced Miyamoto, who had previously designed the art for 1979's Sheriff, was charged with the task. Working under Gunpei Yokoi, Miyamoto created



ALSO BY MIYAMOTO

Not everything Miyamoto touches turns to gold, here are some of his less successful creations…



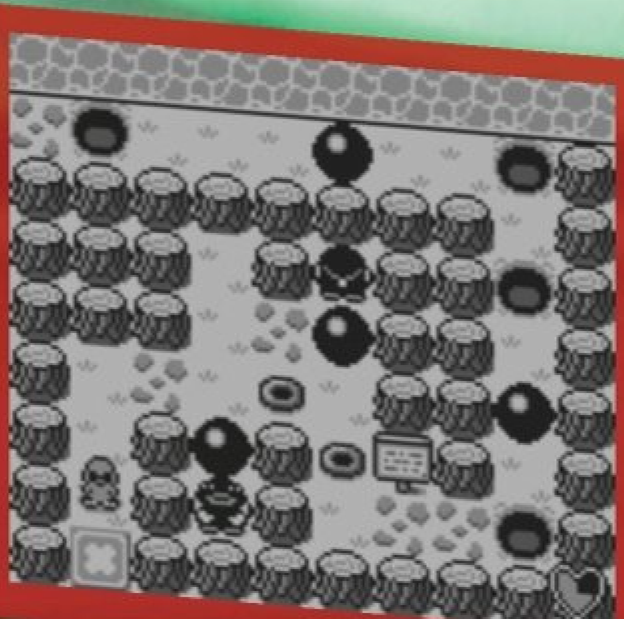
DEVIL WORLD 1984/87, Famicom/NES

■ Inspired by his love of *Pac-Man*, Miyamoto made his own maze game in 1984 but *Devil World* was a flop for a couple of reasons. Featuring a maze whose boundaries moved in accordance with a dancing devil, as well as goals that changed with each stage, it was a bit tough for players to get their heads around. Plus, the religious imagery in the game meant that *Devil World* wasn't released in the US.



POPEYE 1982, Arcade

■ When Miyamoto was first asked to turn *Radar Scope* into something that would sell in America, he wanted to create a game based on one of his favourite cartoons, *Popeye*. Nintendo didn't have the rights to the characters but Miyamoto eventually got his wish in a rare licensed game under Nintendo. Like *Donkey Kong*, *Popeye* is notable for the unique challenges posed by each stage.



MOLE MANIA

1996, Game Boy

■ In 1996 Nintendo released a Game Boy game about cute little creatures which would reverse the fortunes of the portable system and change the company's future. That game wasn't *Mole Mania*. More of a footnote in Nintendo history, this obscure release is nevertheless a great puzzle game, recently given a new lease of life in its 3DS Virtual Console re-release.



CHIBI-ROBO 2005, GameCube

■ Originally due to be published by Bandai as a point-and-click adventure, *Chibi-Robo* underwent huge changes when the game was acquired by Nintendo. Miyamoto's influence helped reinvent the game as a *Zelda*-like action-adventure. The overhaul delayed the release until late in the GameCube's life but *Chibi-Robo* was so good it became big enough to support two DS sequels and a Wii remake.



PAC-MAN VS 2003, GameCube

■ This official collaboration turned the original game into a four-player affair, with one person controlling Pac-Man on a GBA screen and three others taking control of ghosts on the TV. Though hard to find on GameCube (it was only given away with select Namco games) it got a second chance on DS's *Namco Museum* and is soon to be reinvented as a Luigi-themed mini-game in Wii U's *Nintendo Land*.



Wii MUSIC 2008, Wii

■ *Wii Music* stood apart from the rhythm-action craze of its generation with more free-form gameplay that tried to teach players the principles of music playing and encourage creative play-styles. It achieved those aims but with only 2.65 million copies sold, it is considered a failure in comparison, and Miyamoto's ambition to create an enhanced sequel remains unfulfilled so far.



WORDS OF WISDOM

Miyamoto's five greatest interview quotes

"Videogames are bad for you? That's what they said about rock and roll"

"Right now, I have to ask myself what kind of game I would be willing to work on right before my death"

"I could make Halo. It's not that I couldn't design that game. I just choose not to"

"I think that inside every adult is the heart of a child. We just gradually convince ourselves that we have to act more like adults"

"A delayed game is eventually good, a bad game is forever bad"

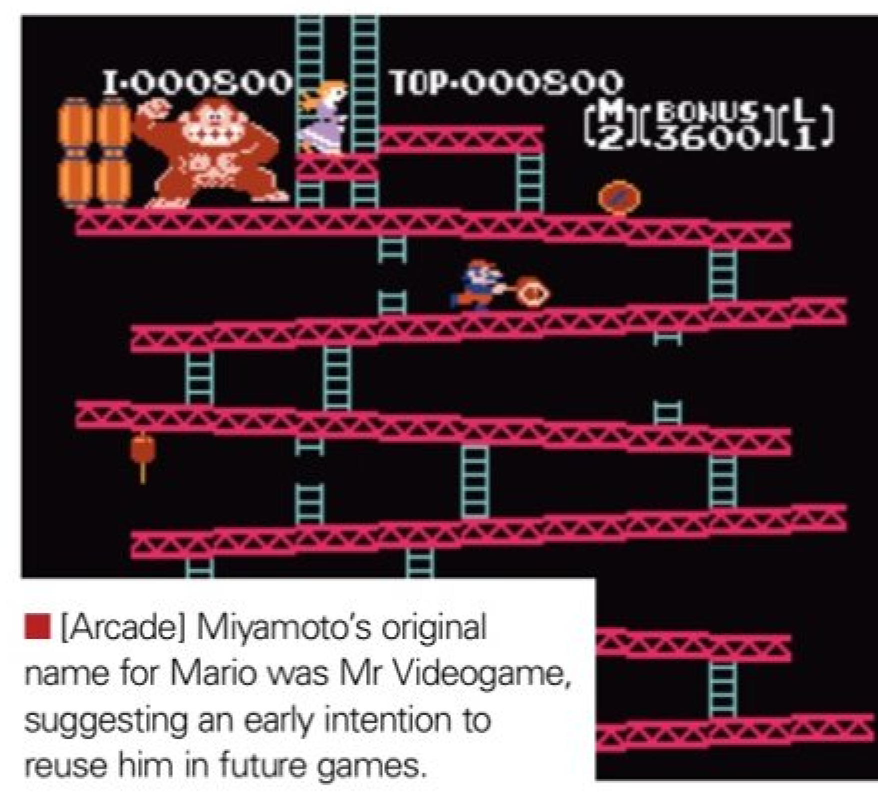


■ [Wii] Miyamoto's ability to make even the simplest of games fun has been invaluable in Nintendo's casual game revolution.









■ [Arcade] Miyamoto's original name for Mario was Mr Videogame, suggesting an early intention to reuse him in future games.

Donkey Kong, a game that played so well it continues to be played by high score chasers to this day, and reversed Nintendo's fortunes. Launched the year after Yokoi's Game & Watch brand, *Donkey Kong* helped put Nintendo on the map and keep it there.

Much can be and has been written about the importance of *Donkey Kong*'s gameplay, particularly of its importance to the invention of the platform game, but it was also crucial to the evolution of the medium because of its use of character. Miyamoto's background in comic art, as well as his love of the *Popeye* cartoon (which he was planning to adapt into a game at the time) led him to think about the presentation of *Donkey Kong* as much as its gameplay, believing quite rightly that the depicted love triangle of the game would make it easier to identify with than the soulless, faceless subject matter of *Radar Scope*. A year after Namco's *Pac-Man*, it tapped into a key evolution in videogames: the creation of recognisable characters who could attract players to games not only once, but multiple times as they reappeared in sequels and other games.

In *Donkey Kong* and *Mario*, Nintendo harnessed the compelling power of character design and continued to create new characters for many years to come, from Link to Samus Aran, Fox McCloud and many more. You only need look at the incredible roster of characters in *Super Smash Bros* compared to, say, the underwhelming non-entities in Sony's *PlayStation All-Stars* to see how instrumental characters have been to Nintendo's success. Miyamoto, of course, has played a crucial role in this, right up to the modern age with the advent of the Mii – a way to turn players themselves into videogame characters through a system that Miyamoto worked on for decades before realisation.

In recent years, Miyamoto's personal contributions to gaming have slowed. Now partly a spokesperson for Nintendo as well as a mentor to the next generation of the company's creators, he has less time to create games of his own. But he does occasionally take on a pet project and is still doing what he does best, turning his personal playfulness into gaming. *Pikmin* came from the then 49-year-old's passion for gardening, while *Nintendogs* was inspired by his family pet. As the designer enters his sixties, and with no intention to retire, we can only imagine what sort of games he may be inspired to make in the future. But even if he walked away from videogames today, his chapter in the history books would take up more space than virtually anybody else's. Shigeru Miyamoto didn't invent videogames but he defined them and it's a rare modern videogame that can't trace its roots back to *Mario* and *Zelda*.

MIYAMOTO S ACHIEVEMENTS

HE SAVED NINTENDO'S SKIN

■ When Miyamoto created *Donkey Kong* he didn't just find a use for some leftover arcade cabinets, he created a cultural icon and placed Nintendo at the centre of the burgeoning videogames revolution. *Donkey Kong* is Nintendo's big bang; responsible for all of the life and achievements that have come since.

HE DEFINED VIDEOGAMES

■ With *Super Mario Bros* and *The Legend Of Zelda*, Miyamoto created two equally iconic templates for game design. Their influence was immediate and can be felt in every character-based game that has come since. Even games like *Portal* or *Grand Theft Auto* owe an immeasurable debt to Miyamoto's vision.

HE MADE 3D WORK

■ 3D gaming existed long before the Nintendo 64 but it was ugly, clumsy and primitive. By designing Super Mario 64 in tandem with the N64's analogue controller, Miyamoto achieved a perfect synergy of software and hardware that wrote the rules for 3D gaming in much the same way that *Super Mario Bros* did for 2D.

HE BROUGHT GAMING TO THE MASSES

■ With Reggie Fils-Aime and Satoru Iwata, he built upon the foundations of old masters Gunpei Yokoi and Hiroshi Yamauchi. The team's introduction of DS in 2004 widened the audience for videogames, led to an explosion of mainstream popularity in *Wii Sports*, and built an audience that would embrace casual gaming on iPhone.

HE PASSED ON HIS WISDOM

■ While many creators retire or move on to start their own companies, Miyamoto has remained with Nintendo and spent the latter part of his career passing on his knowledge and experience to younger creators, even though the *Mario* and *Zelda* series are now directed and produced by others.

RETRORATED

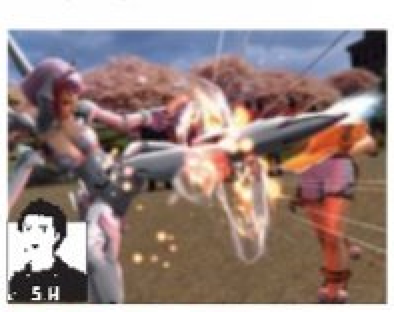


>> We return to the suck with Cannon Fodder 3, play the best entry in the Tekken franchise for a long time, and discover if all the hype about Capcom's JoJo's Bizarre Adventure was worth it

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
They Bleed Pixels
It certainly has its issues, but I've found myself unable to put this quirky indie title down.



STUART
Tekken Tag Tournament 2
A fantastic addition to the Tekken series that plays as good as it looks.



DAVID
Tekken Tag Tournament 2
This is a superb fighter. It is not only accessible, but still offers plenty of depth. Amazing.

Tekken Tag Tournament 2

IS NAMCO'S LATEST A TAG OF DISTINCTION OR JUST ANY OLD IRON?

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, ARCADE, WII U
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £51.05
- **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI GAMES
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4

BRIEF HISTORY

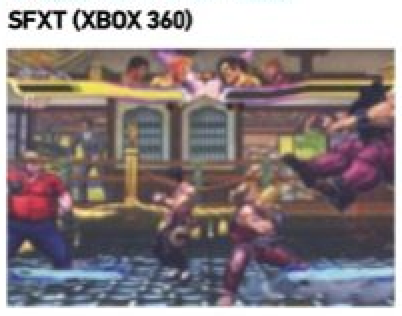
» *Tekken Tag Tournament* debuted in arcades in 1999 and was ported to the PS2 the following year. Namco released an arcade sequel in Japan in 2011 and then followed up its release with an update called *Unlimited* in 2012. The home conversion is based on the update but features console-exclusive fighters.

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
TEKKEN 3 (PLAYSTATION)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
SFXT (XBOX 360)





The original *Tekken Tag Tournament* was released back in 1999, the same year *The Matrix* was wowing cinema-goers and Britney Spears was conquering the music charts with half a school uniform. Yes it really was that long ago.

While many *Tekken* games have been released since, after having such a blast with *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* this month we are now left slightly bemused as to why it took Namco so long to produce a sequel – and no we're not counting *Tekken Hybrid*. Perhaps part of the reason has to do with the fact that many *Tekken* fans felt a bit nonplussed by the original – it was non canon to the storyline, and many considered it something of an expansion rather than a fully-formed game. This sequel though, which is based on the updated 'Unlimited' arcade version of *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*, will most likely have those same people thinking a little differently about the team-based spin-off to Namco's flagship fighting series.

The clear genius of *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is that it will appeal to both hardcore *Tekken* nuts and those people who have been out of the series for a while – it's a great sequel for the former, but also a really comfortable re-entry point for those falling into the latter. A big part of its accessibility comes from its really comprehensive training mode, dubbed Fight Lab, which takes you through the basics and complexities of the fighting system (which hasn't changed all that much over the years) as well as the new team-based mechanics that this sequel introduces (basically tag-combos and tag-throws) via an amusing side story. So if you've not been keeping up with what's been going on in the franchise, and feel apprehensive about the unfamiliar faces or the integration of the new fight mechanics, then this is the perfect game to get you back up to speed.

With its giant cast list comprising pretty much every man, women and boxing bipedal animal that has ever thrown a limb in an Iron Fist Tournament, its 50+ character





»[Xbox 360] The customisation mode could be a game all in itself (albeit a niche one). And yes, that is Jack with the head of Tweetie Pie.









»[Xbox 360] She is D, delirious, She is I, incredible, She is S, superficial…



»[Xbox 360] The brand new duo fronting ITV's *Daybreak* is announced. The new set is a wrestling ring.

✱GO DEEPER

>> The console versions feature new fighters, modes and stages over the arcade version.

>> The Wii U version will feature exclusive character costumes, include Star Fox and *Metroid*-themed garb.

select screen is an impressive sight, and gradually working your way through everyone reminds you that it is the fighters that are one of the highlights of the series. There are a lot of varied combatants all with pretty distinctive different fighting styles, and thanks to *Tekken*'s wonderfully simple combat system, which is geared towards a button per limb; low, medium and high attacks; and the stringing together of simple combos and juggles with button spamming and comparatively easy inputs, getting to know them is quickly satisfying.

As well as feeling a bit faster than previous *Tekken* entries, which we found to be a really big plus for helping to balance the fighters a little, you can now opt to battle through the main Arcade Mode with either a single fighter or team of two, with your attacks and stamina increased with a solo fighter to compensate. This immediately lets you pass on the whole Tag element if you wish, but more importantly allows newcomers to get accustomed to the combat system and the newer characters before stepping into the whole team aspect.

This being *Tekken*, each character also has their own ending movie and you get the obligatory hair-tearing final boss in Unknown. *Tekken* is a series that has always excelled in offering its fans more over the standard Arcade and Versus Modes, and *Tekken Tag 2* certainly doesn't disappoint in this area either. Packed with a staggering number of modes and options, over the two aforementioned ones, you also get the classic Survival and Time Attack modes, four-player pair-on-pair multiplayer, the insanely addictive time sap that is Ghost Mode, and an entertaining Team Battle mode that lets you create and fight teams of up to six fighters.

Add all this up and *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* really starts to feel like a definitive *Tekken* package, but it doesn't end there. Away from the fighting you can spend gold earned from winning fights on purchasing unlocked items and costumes and personalising the fighters. And though it doesn't allow you to create fighters from scratch, nor is it as comprehensive as the one Namco packaged with *SoulCalibur V*, it's still a stodgy side order that expends the life and entertainment value of the game greatly.

Our only real criticism is that it that *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* doesn't really push the series forward in any way, and for that reason does feels a little bit safe. But whether you're an ardent fan, newcomer to the series or someone who's lost interest but is now looking to get back into it, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* captures the very best side of the franchise, and lets everyone get involved.

In a nutshell

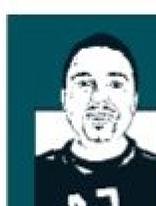
The most balanced, accessible and entertaining *Tekken* we've played in a long time. It doesn't push the envelope, but is a wonderful love letter to the series as a whole.

>> Score 90%



The Wacky World of Tekken

Tekken is the Stephen Chow of fighting games, never taking itself seriously and being more entertaining for it. *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* doesn't break from this tradition and features its fair share of wacky humour. Most of this comes from the game's training mode, Fight Lab, which sees players training up a robot pugilist through some weird and unorthodox fighting scenarios, such as battling guys in Power Ranger costumes, to testing out moves on chubby fighters that look like Ryu, Ken and Akuma.



OPINION

Sure, it's not really original, but the sheer amount of great content Namco has packed into its new fighter is mind-boggling. It's as much a greatest hits of the franchise, as it is a standalone sequel, and proves that it's not only Capcom that knows how to make fantastic fighters. *Tekken* is back in the game with this instalment. Highly recommended.

Darran Jones

»[Xbox 360] *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is loaded with content, with more modes than members of the Mishima family…We think.





» [PC] The destruction you can unleash is quite satisfying. It's a pity then that the levels are so bland to play through.

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Cannon Fodder 3

>> One of the big new elements of *Cannon Fodder 3* are the destructible environments. Pack those grenades...

>> A portable *Cannon Fodder* was once announced for the PSP, but was never released.

>> Jon Hare had no involvement with *Cannon Fodder 3*.

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
CANNON FODDER (AMIGA)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
TINY TROOPERS (PC)

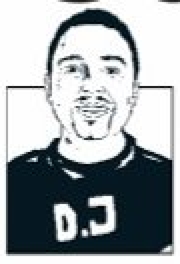


WAR IS HELL

Cannon Fodder 3



» [PC] There are numerous bosses in the game and they pack a mean punch. Be careful.



A new *Cannon Fodder* game has been promised on and off for years. Now that it's finally here, we wish it would retreat to whatever cold clammy hole it crawled from.

Cannon Fodder 3 is quite simply forgettable. It takes everything that made the first game so good and obliterates it, leaving behind an empty shell of a once great game and making us wonder why Codemasters thought it was a good idea to give the beloved franchise to developer Burut CT.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing about this new *Cannon Fodder* is that you can clearly see a good game struggling to get out. It's just bogged down by finicky controls, bad translation, a silly difficulty level and poorly designed levels.

With *Cannon Fodder*, you'd marvel at the tightly designed maps that made retrieving weapons and finding shortcuts a rewarding experience. Here you've got long sprawling stages that require plenty of monotonous backtracking, and feature poorly placed checkpoints.

The instructions are also a nightmare due to the translation, meaning you're given little information for pulling up different weapons, exiting vehicles or, most importantly, splitting up your team. The latter two are mostly redundant anyway, as the vehicles control with all the finesse of a horse in splints, while the fiddly nature of splitting up your party often sees you getting completely overwhelmed by enemy forces.

Graphically, *Cannon Fodder 3* is actually quite decent, with plenty of humorous little touches and a large amount of over-the-top explosions. Enemies are well animated, but can occasionally be hard to see when hiding in cover. Having said that, the soldiers themselves are so racially insensitive you'd rather they stayed hidden anyway. The same can be said for your group of soldiers. In *Cannon Fodder*, you cared for your little dudes, while here you just want the ugly-looking things to die, so little attachment do you have to them.

Add in plenty of bugs that will occasionally crash the game, empty online lobbies and dubious translations and *Cannon Fodder 3* is a poor follow-up for those who loved the 16-bit games. A crushing disappointment that should go directly to Boot Hill.

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC (STEAM)
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £14.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** GAME FACTORY INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** BURUT CT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Cannon Fodder* was originally released in December 93 by Sensible Software. The brainchild of Jon Hare, it was a superb strategic shooter that had you controlling a small squad of dinky soldiers. A follow-up (designed by Stuart Campbell) appeared just under a year later, but then the series remained dormant, only to be rudely awoken by Burut CT.



OPINION



A sequel that drops the grenade, destroying the brilliant and effortless meld of strategy, action and interface that made the original so good. As a big fan of the original, I was really hoping this to be at least half-decent, but sadly it just muddies its good name.

Stuart Hunt

In a nutshell

It at least tries, and it's encouraging to see it hasn't been forgotten about, but this sorry sequel fumbles everything that made the original games so much fun to play, hammering a potentially deadly final nail into the *Cannon Fodder* coffin.

>> Score 45%



They Bleed Pixels

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC (STEAM) » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £6.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SPOOKY SQUID GAMES » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> **There's a lot** to enjoy about *They Bleed Pixels*. It has a wonderful art style, has excellent level design, and plays like a cross between a scrolling fighter and a platformer. It's also extremely tough, perhaps even tougher than the recently released *Spelunky*. Unlike *Spelunky* though, it doesn't always feel that death is down to your own carelessness, which gets more than a little frustrating when you get stuck on some of *They Bleed Pixels*' more insane difficulty spikes (particularly if you want to collect the mystical pages). It's worth sticking with though for the gothic cut-scenes, interesting character, and lush music.

>> Score **73%**

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure HD

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC (STEAM) » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £15.99 » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM » **DEVELOPER:** CYBERCONNECT2 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



>> **We're utterly baffled** as to why Capcom would re-release such a niche fighter, but we're glad they did. While the price is steep, there's no denying that Capcom's quirky fighter is a lot of fun to play. The net code isn't as impressive as we'd like, but Capcom has included options like being able to turn the HD filter off. It's a hardcore experience, with a high point of entry and some tough opponents, but mastery brings its rewards. The roster of characters is plentiful, there are some truly weird combatants, including a little pug dog, while the animation throughout is smooth and incredibly impressive.

>> Score **75%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we take a look at the latest classics that have been re-released for a new generation of gamers

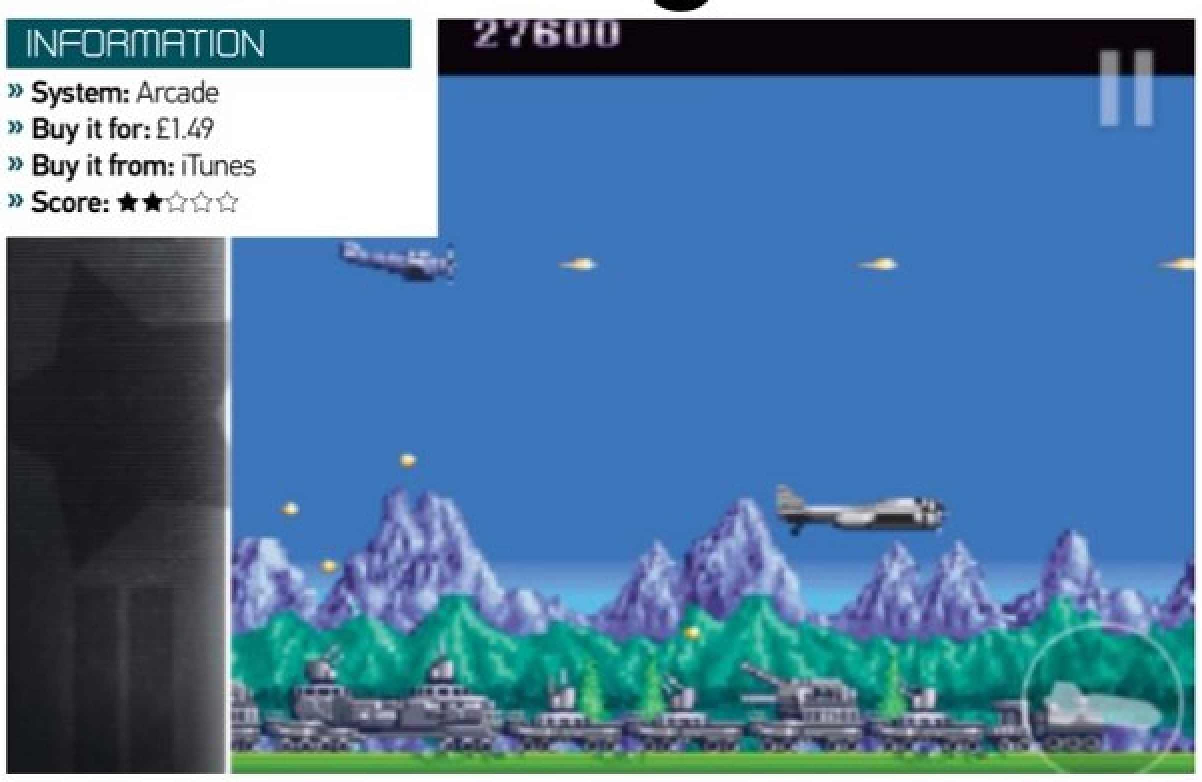


★DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

P-47 – The Phantom Fighter

INFORMATION

» **System:** Arcade
» **Buy it for:** £1.49
» **Buy it from:** iTunes
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆



Jaleco certainly wasn't the biggest coin-op developer around, but it did make a number of interesting and quirky games over the years. Last month we revisited *Rod Land*, thanks to a rather impressive iOS port. This month, we're getting stuck into one of its best shoot-'em-ups: *P-47 – The Phantom Fighter*.

Set in World War II, *P-47* has you mowing down an increasing amount of German fighters across eight varied stages. Helicopters will occasionally appear onscreen that drop power-ups when destroyed, which range from bog-standard bombs to useful speed-ups. *P-47* wasn't groundbreaking, but that didn't mean it wasn't highly enjoyable, with the battle against a stunning sunset on level two remaining a personal shoot-'em-up highlight for us.

Sadly, the iOS version lets the side down. For some reason, this particular version of the game (1.2) doesn't have any sound effects. The music sounds lovely, but the punchy rat-a-tat of bullets and satisfying explosions are nowhere to be heard, making for a rather muted experience. The chosen controls are also a little too floaty (something *Blazing Star* also suffered from), lacking the responsiveness that many Taito and Cave shooters boast on iOS.

There's a virtual joypad option if you don't like dragging your finger across the screen, but it shrinks the game's screen down to a fraction of its size. This would be fine if there was an iPad version, but it's only currently available on iPhone (it looks rather ugly when scaled up via the iPad's hardware). We loved the original *P-47*, but this iOS release is disappointing.

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Worms 2

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** ★★★★★

» 15 years on and Team 17's hit sequel remains one of the best games in the *Worms'* franchise. While it didn't deviate from the core mechanics of the Amiga original (aside from an excellent level editor and online support) it's so chock-full of new weapons that it feels like a completely different experience. Full of quirky humour and offering weapons like the banana bomb and the sheep strike, it's an excellent party game.



Metal Slug X

» **System:** Neo Geo
» **Buy it for:** 900 Points
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console
» **Score:** ★★★★★

» This is an excellent conversion of SNK's hit run-and-gun. The original *Metal Slug X* was released to fix all the slow-down issues that plagued *Metal Slug 2* and is a modified, remixed version. It remains an extremely slick addition to the franchise, with satisfying boss battles, a great array of weaponry and plenty of new Slugs to take for a spin. Another must-have Neo Geo game you shouldn't miss.



Legacy Of Kain: Blood Omen 2

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

» Raziel may have been the good guy, but it was rival vampire Kain who got to have all the fun in the *Legacy Of Kain* franchise. This in part is due to the huge number of powerful abilities that the vampire lord is able to gain as the game progresses. Unfortunately, while elements of *Blood Omen 2* remain good fun, it's not aged particularly well, due to simplistic puzzles and an underdeveloped combat system.



Donkey Kong Jr

» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** £14.50
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console 3DS
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

» Why can't we receive the original arcade versions of Nintendo's games? They can't be that hard to make, surely. Instead we have to make do with the NES version, which is okay, but just feels like a highly-priced missed opportunity on behalf of Nintendo. Jr is a little sluggish to control, and the level design isn't a patch on the original game, meaning boredom soon sets in. Fun, but a little bit shallow.

▼ VIRTUAL CONSOLE

As VC games continue to maddeningly trickle out, we've decided to highlight our favourite shooters on the service.

Lords Of Thunder
System: PC Engine CD-ROM
Buy it for: 800 Points
Buy it from: Virtual Console
Score: ★★★★★

Uridium
System: C64
Buy it for: 500 Points
Buy it from: Virtual Console
Score: ★★★★★

Wild Guns
System: SNES
Buy it for: 800 Points
Buy it from: Virtual Console
Score: ★★★★★

Musha
System: Mega Drive
Buy it for: 800 Points
Buy it from: Virtual Console
Score: ★★★★★



▼ PSN

It's been pretty quiet on PSN, but we're hoping the recent Vita update that made PSone games compatible will result in new releases.

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty
System: PS2
Buy it for: £11.99
Buy it from: PSN
Score: ★★★☆☆

Urban Chaos
System: PSone
Buy it for: £3.99
Buy it from: PSN
Score: ★★★☆☆

Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater
System: PS2
Buy it for: £11.99
Buy it from: PSN
Score: ★★★★★



▼ PC SERVICES

We've been trawling through Steam this month; here are just a few of the gems we dug up.

Grand Theft Auto Complete Pack
System: PC
Buy it for: £19.99
Buy it from: www.steampowered.com
Score: ★★★★

Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time
System: PC
Buy it for: £6.99
Buy it from: www.steampowered.com
Score: ★★★★★

Baldur's Gate 2 Complete
System: PC
Buy it for: $9.99
Buy it from: www.gog.com
Score: ★★★★★





I'm not sure I should mention it – and please don't encourage the developers by paying for the thing – but I got quite close to including XBLIG "game" One Million Taps in this issue's What's Brewing because it has that Cassette 50 crapness which almost makes it enjoyable. I'm still wondering how something that ridiculous comes to exist – have a look at www.kikstart.eu/easy-6502

BEING A MAGE ISN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES!

MAGE: THE ENCHANTED CRYSTALS



» [Videopac] For me? You shouldn't have!



» [Videopac+] Peek-a-boo!

Young Wizzy's father is an advanced mage and, as they seem to do on occasion, has created a powerful and potentially dangerous spell. Sensing that other, far less scrupulous magical practitioners have been using their own incantations to secretly observe his work, he has decided to split everything up, place the parts into four enchanted crystals and conceal them in some abandoned tunnels near his village.

But even after all of these precautions, the danger of those crystals being discovered is too great, so now poor Wizzy has been charged with braving those same tunnels and their ghoulish occupants to collect the spell elements and place them into an enchanted chest which, presumably, cleanses them to ensure that his father's work can't fall into the wrong hands.

The crystals, the chest where they need to be deposited and some colour-coded keys which are required to unlock doors to otherwise inaccessible parts of the map have all been scattered around a four-by-four screen maze which has been packed with twisting passages and, as already noted, there are also enemies roaming the corridors to keep unwanted visitors away. The nasties aren't particularly bright and won't react to an intruder's presence, but they boast a decent turn of speed and it'll take quite precise timing to sneak through the gaps they leave in their patrol routes. Bumping into the walls will do no harm at all to Wizzy's health, but being grabbed by the ghoulies is immediately fatal and he only has the one life.

The in-game objects are all single colour sprites apart from Wizzy himself – who sports a hooded cloak that makes him look like a distant cousin of Bomberman – and the backgrounds are, due to the nature of the hardware, not much more than square blocks with a colour gradient, but everything is serviceable. As you can see, there's a slight difference in the images above: one shows how *Mage: The Enchanted Crystals* will appear while on a standard Philips Videopac or Magnavox Odyssey2 while the others are how it looks on the more powerful Videopac+. Similarly, owners of optional The Voice speech module will have the sparse sound effects during place enhanced with snippets of speech.

Quite a bit of attention to detail has gone into *Mage: The Enchanted Crystals* throughout both the game itself and the packaging. One touch we found particularly nice was the online score registration that Revival Studios has been adding to all their games; players who complete *Mage* will be issued with a code which can be entered at the Revival website to register their final score online and collect Achievement-like trophies for meeting conditions such as finishing the mission with less than one minute remaining on the clock or blitzing through in five minutes or less.



FORMAT: VIDEOPAC/ODYSSEY 2
DEVELOPER: REVIVAL STUDIOS
LINK: WWW.KIKSTART.EU/MAGE-VIDEOPAC
RELEASE: 2012
PRICE: 39 EUROS (NOT INCLUDING P&P)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



» [Videopac+] The dark and nasty regions where nobody goes.

retro GAMER SIZZLER

90%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

IMAGINARIO COLECTIVO

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD CPC » **DEVELOPER:** ESP SOFT
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/IMAGINARO-CPC » **PRICE:** FREE

The story behind *Imaginario Colectivo* – which translates as Collective Imagination – revolves around an ambitious experiment to take some of the world's greatest minds, plug them into a supercomputer and let this combined intelligence to dream up a better world. Of course, the process backfires and now the entire planet has been put into a catatonic state with just one human somehow avoiding this fate. That person is Miki, the son of the chief scientist behind the project.

But humanity is lost because the difficulty curve of ESP Soft's latest platformer has been ramped up to almost an unplayable level and the poor lad is doomed to fail. And that's something of a shame really because a lot of effort appears to have gone into the graphics and sound of *Imaginario Colectivo* but almost nobody will stick with it long enough to appreciate that work, even with the cheat code from the website enabled.

59%

» [Amstrad CPC] Pump up the volume.





» [SNES] To me, to you!

MAZEZAM CHALLENGE

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** SUPER NES » **DEVELOPER:** ALEKMAUL
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/MAZEZAM-SNES » **PRICE:** FREE

The MazezaM is a series of traps designed to catch unwary travellers; on entering from the left, the door slams shut behind them and the only escape is to navigate all the way to the right-hand side of the play area. Each level contains items of furniture dotted around and the rows of tables, pots and chests all move together along with the gaps between them as though they're nailed to planks; the task is to manipulate the rows to make a path for the player's character.

Every version of *MazezaM* has been difficult, dating back as far as Malcolm Tyrrell's original for the Spectrum, and *MazezaM Challenge* doesn't let the side down to the point where even the opening levels for beginners take some thought to complete. Still, the real stumpers arrive soon afterwards, and you'll spend a good deal of time scratching your head before getting those eureka moments. Levels can be aborted at any time with a life lost in the process and the game issues codes for every puzzle including the very first – but even then only the most hardcore of puzzle fans should apply.

80%

VADE RETRO

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

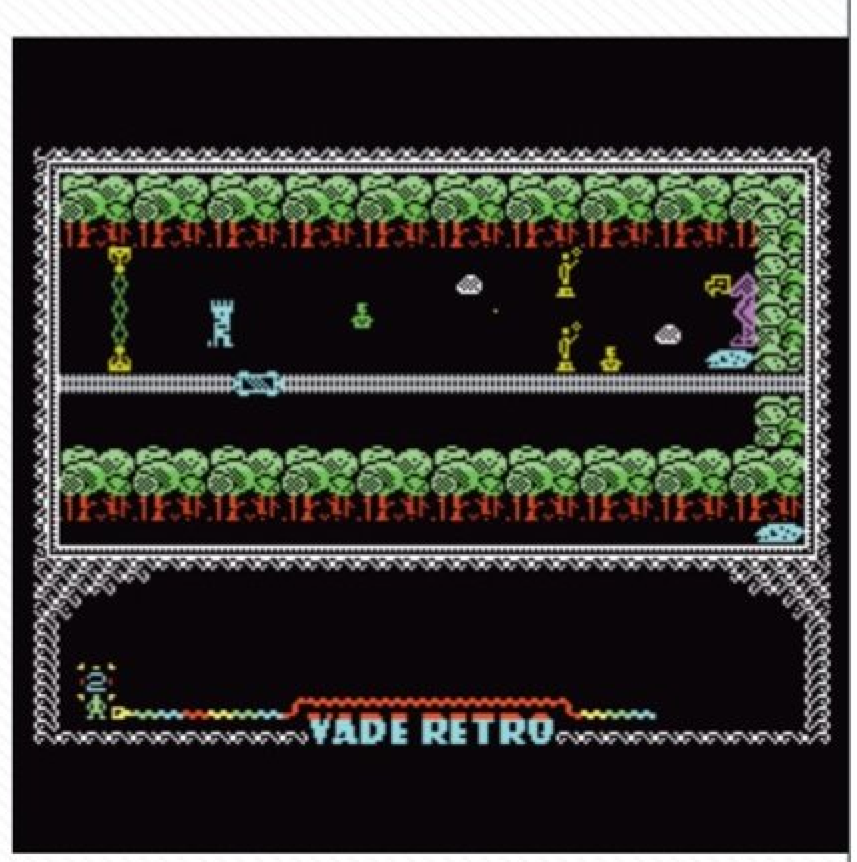
» **FORMAT**: SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** JBGV
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/VADE-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

It's a huge match in *Football Manager* on the Spectrum: one of the players has just missed his second lone run towards the goal when the entire game takes a surprising turn as a UFO descends from the heavens and abducts him! Now the poor footballer is stuck on an alien world and surrounded by hostile creatures that would rather see him destroyed than escape.

Getting home involves exploring screens, finding beacons which disable force fields and using transporters and indeed vehicular transport to move between areas of the map or cover expanses of wasteland. Enemies can either be avoided or shot, with later ones requiring more hits before they're vanquished.

The graphics are small but detailed and colourful and navigating pixel-perfect gaps takes a little getting used to if players don't notice the hint on the help screen. *Vade Retro* is an enjoyable multi-screen romp with some amusing touches.

84%



» [Spectrum] Time flies by…

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Amstrad CPC] The game that lead to *Star Sabre*.

>> A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY…

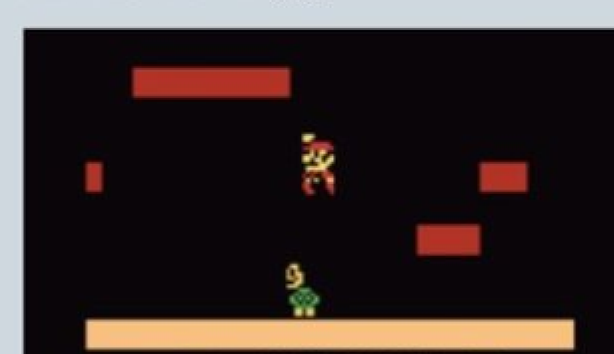
Amstrad CPC genius Paul Kooistra has been digging through his old work disks and found what he's named *Star Sabre Zero* since it's the original project from the early Nineties that inspired *Star Sabre*. It isn't a complete game, but is an interesting piece of homebrew gaming history and some reasonable blasting action. Take a look at www.kikstart.eu/star-sabre-zero-cpc



» [Atari Jaguar] Serious retro goodness.

>> DO JAGUARS LAY EGGS?

A surprise release put together by Mark "GroovyBee" Ball for the Video Olympics event at the Lass O' Gowrie in Manchester was a conversion of classic platformer *Chuckie Egg*, developed in a mere three hours the evening before the event. It's seen further work since and at the time of writing is almost there at well over 90% complete. Jag fans can have a peek at the Atari Age thread hidden behind www.kikstart.eu/chuckie-jag



» [Atari 2600] Over here son, on me 'ead.

>> SOMEBODY CALL A PLUMBER!

And on the subject of conversions, there's a work in progress of *Super Mario Brothers*… for the Atari 2600! It's still quite early days and just one level at the moment, but most of the elements are there and the programmer is working on adding more. www.kikstart.eu/smb-2600 heads over to the Atari Age thread and the file is in the first post with BIN at the end of its filename.

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> DANGER IS THE GAME HE PLAYS

Spyleaks is all about the dangerous world of espionage where the player takes charge of Jules, an intelligence officer who is in the process of infiltrating and recovering plans for world domination from a faceless, evil corporation with nefarious ideas about the destruction of Freedom City. The gameplay switches between puzzle-based levels, a series of daring escapes that take place against the clock and straight-out shooting as Jules' handler directs him to the important documents. www.kikstart.eu/spyleaks-xblig leads to the start of Jules' mission.

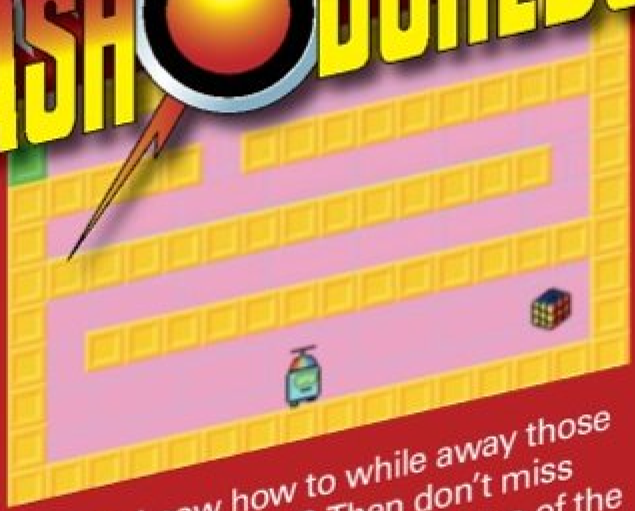


>> HAVE YOU SEEN MY CHOPPER?

If you've ever fancied taking control of a military spec helicopter and wading into battle against overwhelming forces, *Desert Strike*-inspired *Chopper Storm* might be for you. Knocking enemies out of the sky was hugely satisfying, but it doesn't take prisoners. For players who like their airborne combat tricky, a fully-fuelled bird is ready for take-off over at www.kikstart.eu/chopper-storm-xblig



FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at 100% Complete.

MANY PLATFORMERS HAVE SECRETS HIDDEN FOR EXPERIENCED PLAYERS TO FIND, BUT THIS TAKES THAT PROCESS A STEP FURTHER; TO COMPLETE THE GAME, EVERY HIDDEN ITEM WILL NEED TO BE FOUND. SOME BLOCKS MOVE TO REVEAL CONCEALED AREAS, WHICH ARE HARD TO FIND BUT THE GREEN SUNGLASSES HELP! WWW.KIKSTART.EU/100-PERCENT-FLASHA

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .



PACIFIC WINGS

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/PACIFIC-WINGS-XBLIG

***Pacific Wings* is,** like the XBLIG game *Spitfire* we looked at a few issues a go, a vertically-scrolling World War II-themed shoot-'em-up. Unlike *Spitfire*, however, the author hasn't tried to "modernise" the gameplay by adding health bars or unlockable planes, so the only thing a player needs to worry about is the enemy aircraft with their well-aimed bullets. All that really prevents it from being a straight up direct *1942* clone is the lack of a roll button.

The collisions are extremely overenthusiastic and there will be times when the plane explodes into flames just because something looked funny at its airspace. It's a pretty frustrating little quirk to have to play around, but we've seen a lot worse. For players willing to work around that, *Pacific Wings* is a cheap and relatively cheerful spot of aerial blasting.

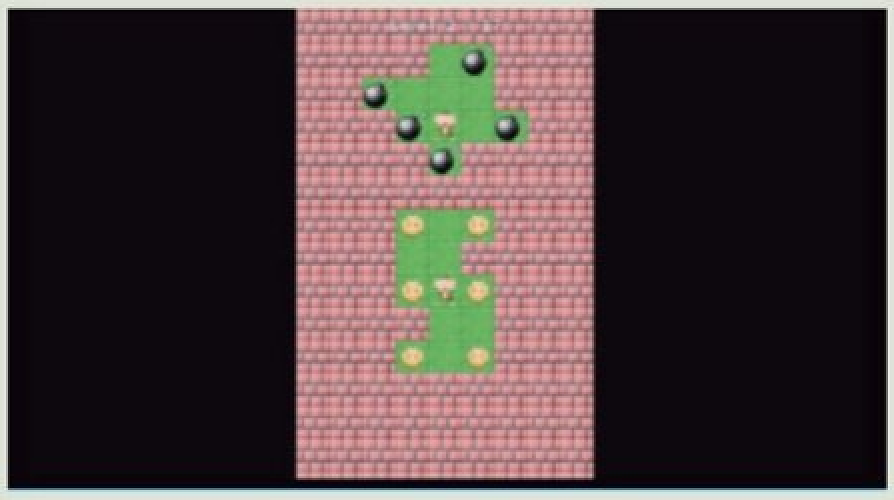


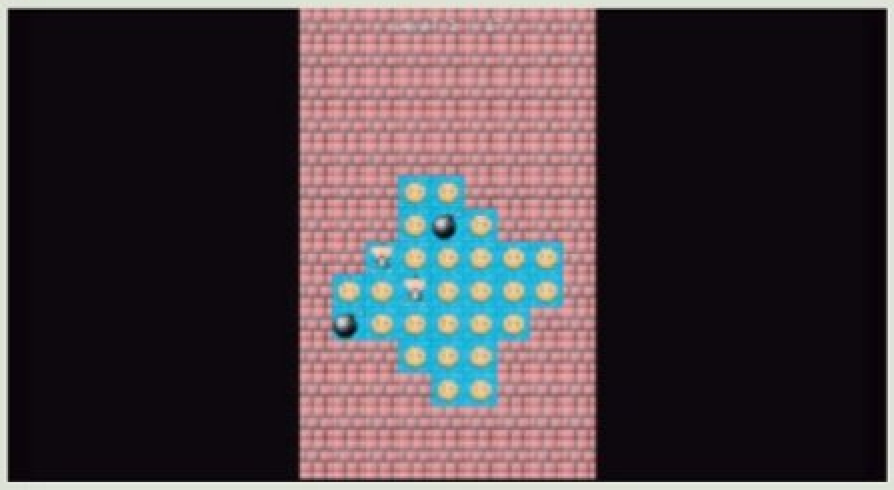
2012

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/2012-XBLIG

Indiana Jones wannabe Frank Mors desperately wants that big archaeological discovery which will make his name, but the best he's found is delving into the mystery behind the predicted end of days when the Mayan calendar ends. And, once he and the others at the dig site count down to the big moment, the prophecy comes true as the zombie uprising starts.

Rather surprisingly, the following action isn't blood and thunder twin-stick shooting. This is instead a role-playing mission where non-player characters offer advice, sell weapons and ask Frank to complete quests for them into the zombie-infested lands around the settlement. Fans of the genre will want to try it out first, but wedging zombies into an RPG works reasonably well.





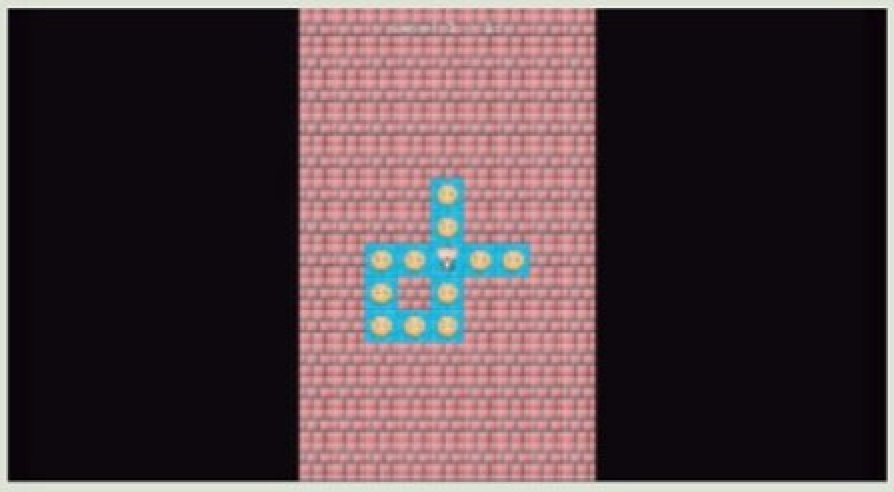
MAZE OF APES

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/MAZE-APES-XBLIG

Maze Of Apes sees primates confronted with puzzles that have been stuffed full of yummy cookies, and challenged to devour every biscuit. Of course, it's never going to be a simple case of meandering around a stage; there are tiles around the play area with special properties to make things more difficult. For example, one tile will turn into a wall when stepped on which can't be passed after moving off and others will cause apes to temporarily lose control and slide across them.

The challenge is therefore to find the correct route through each stage without accidentally boxing off cookies so they can't be collected, getting stuck in a corner, or bumping into something that explodes. And the player isn't necessarily going to be controlling just one ape either, sometimes there are two on screen and every move has to be well considered to avoid putting one of them into harm's way.

While this isn't the most visually appealing game we've seen recently – especially considering the hardware it's running on – the gameplay is present and correct, managing to be both frustrating and addictive in fairly equal measure and there are three difficulty settings to select from, which each contain a good selection of puzzles to work through.





HOMEBREW HEROES

MICK FARROW HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED A REMAKE OF ULTIMATE'S SPECTRUM CLASSIC ATIC ATAC, WHICH CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM WWW.KIKSTART.EU/ATIC-REMAKE-PC. WE POPPED OUR HEADS AROUND THE DOORS OF HIS SPOOKY CASTLE TO SEE IF WE COULD GET A FEW WORDS AND PERHAPS A PIECE OF TWO OF THE HIDDEN KEY OF ACG

Q&A

What do you think it was that drew you to *Atic Atac* as a game to remake?
I'm a big fan of Ultimate games and thought it would be a fairly easy game to try and remake but as usual it turned out to be more complex than I had originally thought!

And how different would you say *Atic Atac* was to write compared to your previous remakes?
This time, I had half an idea of what I was doing! Seriously though, my previous remakes have been quite simple by design so combining *Atic Atac*'s different elements was a challenge for me.

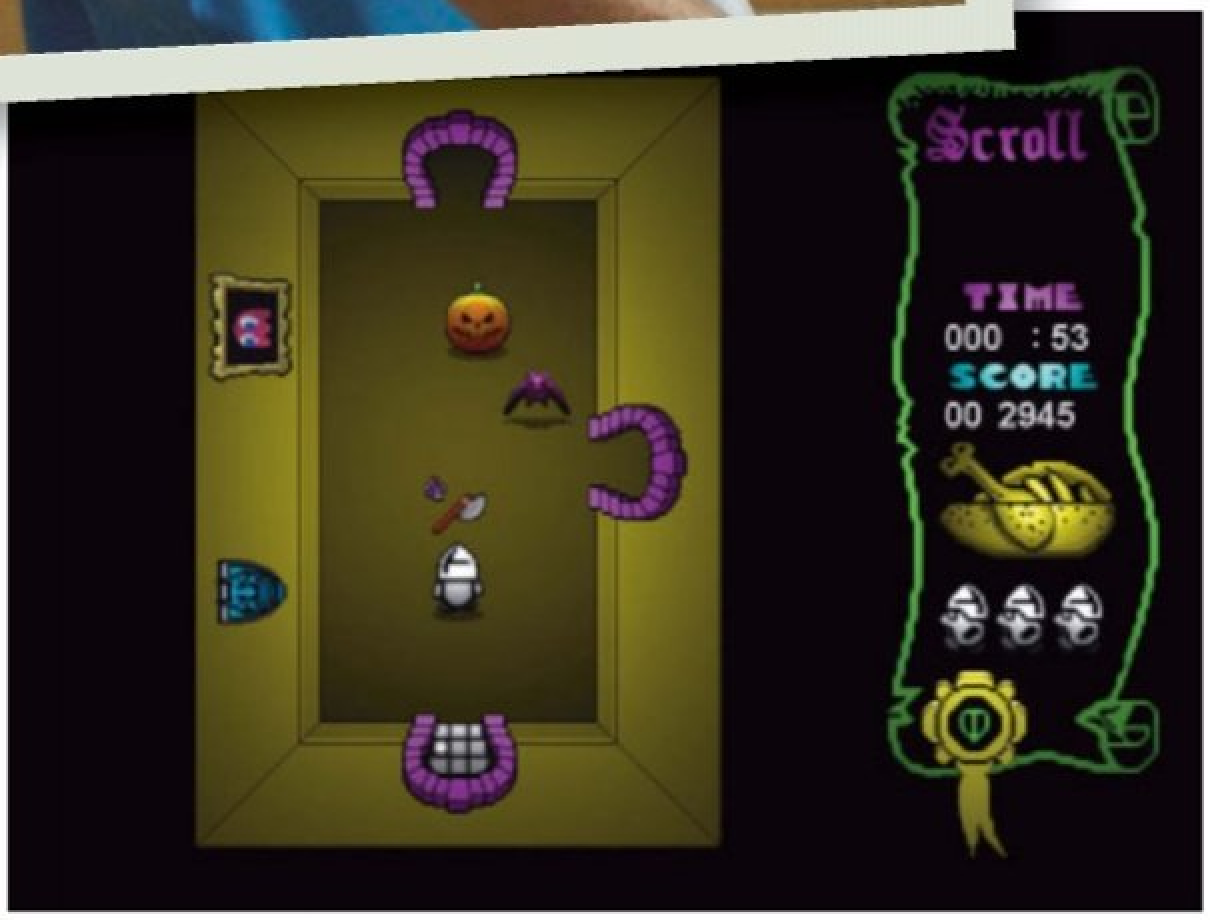
Was your plan always to remain faithful to the original game or were you perhaps tempted to expand on it in certain areas?
I always try to stay as close to the original of a game as possible but I did want to expand it a little in terms of rooms. I was going to include a magenta key and door somewhere which would have led to some Ultimate tribute rooms (artwork on the walls, characters from other games bouncing about, etc) but decided against this in the end. I did include some references to other Ultimate games though.

Were there any particularly exciting or difficult points in development?
To be honest, the major difficulty I had was pushing myself to finish the graphics. The exciting part was right near the end when I put the sound effects in. To be able to roam about the castle shooting stuff and hear that lovely squelching sound when entering a room was very satisfying!

If any, what resources did you use to create the in-game maps?
Erm… none, really. Referring to a map from World Of Spectrum, I basically numbered the rooms and then programmed in BASIC data for each room (eg shape, colour, number of exits, etc.) so, if you are in room 83 (start of game) walls will be red, exits N,W,S and so on.

And how were the graphics created?
I use MS Paint to do my graphics and then add lighting effects with PhotoShop.

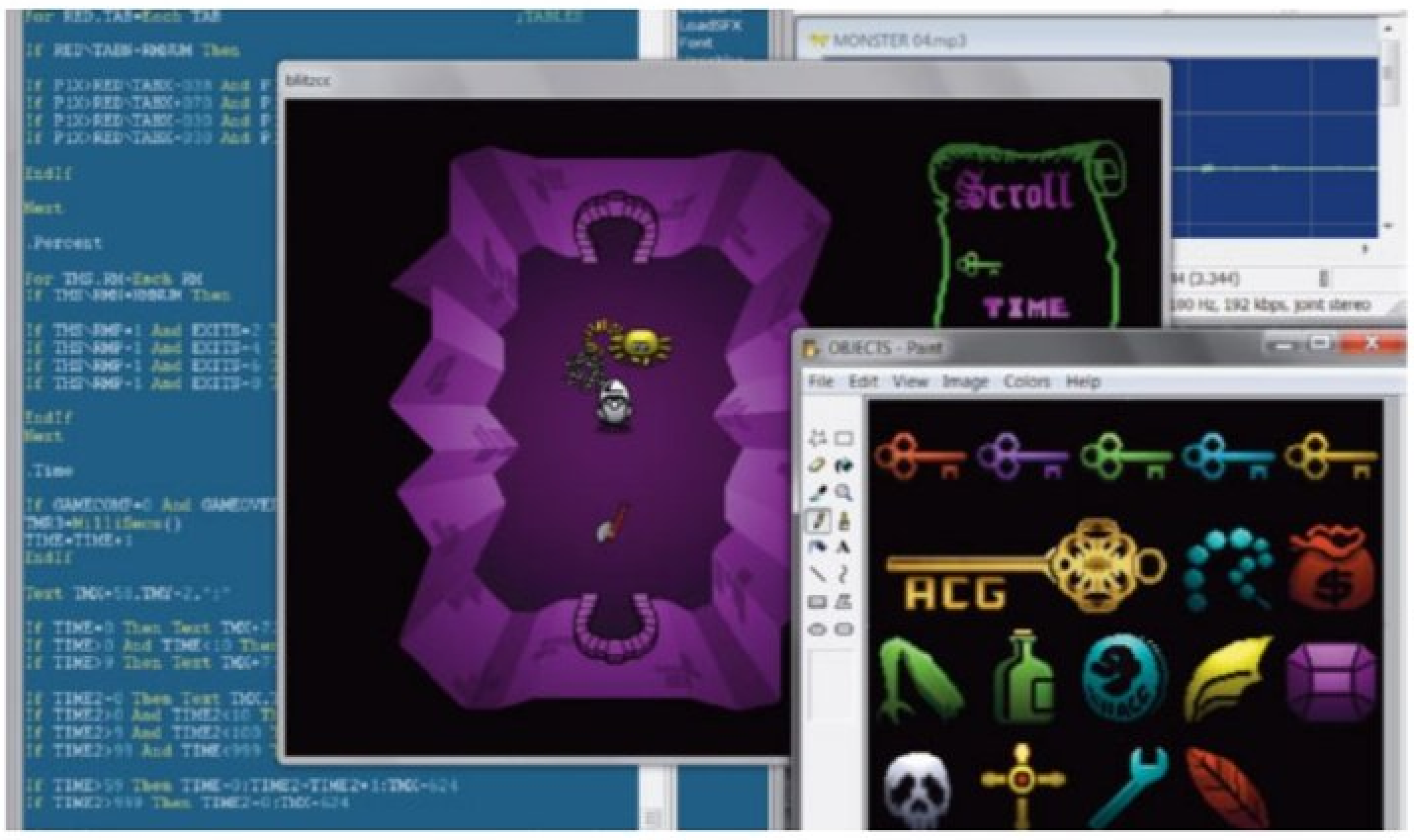
Finally, do you have any plans at all to remake more Ultimate titles or do you have something else in mind?
Well, I've also remade *Jetpac* and *Tranz Am* in the past, so I have no immediate plans for another Ultimate game. Not sure what to attempt next either, I'll have to refer to my pile of abandoned works in progress!



» [PC] I don't get this modern art.



» [PC] The key to another way.



» [PC] Tools of the remaking trade.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

TIME TO MOVE ON



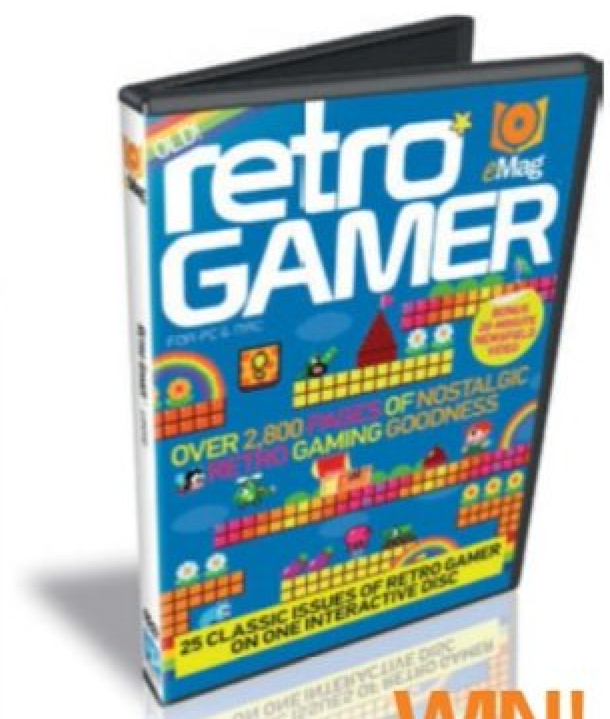
Dear Retro Gamer,
I'm a 35-year old sales manager who has recently discovered both your magazine and Sega's Mega Drive. While I didn't own one back in the day, I was no stranger to going around my friends' houses to play *Golden Axe, Castle Of Illusion* and *PGA Tour Golf*, so I recently picked up a machine and several great games.

I've also picked up the last few issues based on a friend's recommendation, and while it's full of fascinating features, it appears to be largely focused on the 8-bit era of videogames, and not the games that I grew up enjoying as a teenager.

Now I know you can't change things to suit every reader's whim, but surely, if there are people like myself who are just getting into old 16-bit games now, there must be many others? I'm sure they'd all appreciate seeing a little more 16-bit coverage in the magazine.

Graeme Read

Welcome to the retro community, Graeme. We've received quite a few letters like this recently, so it would appear that there's a mini 16-bit revival going on at the moment. We'll make sure that there are suitable features in the next few issues.



WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What was your favourite Psygnosis game?

Roo
Wiz 'n' Liz has exactly the sort of whimsical, accessible gaming that I enjoy, plus it was one of the very few games I could complete when I was a wee boy!

retrogarden
Lemmings. Was largely the reason I got into gaming. Had an Amiga and was part of the box collection (with *Captain Planet* and *Bart Simpson Vs Space Mutants*). Played it to death.

Evermore
I loved the first *WipEout* on PSP – there was loads of free DLC released for it too, which increased its lifespan greatly.

SirClive
Formula One '97 was a *massive* step forward in driving games and was the first time I felt like I had an arcade machine in my home.

joefish
Leander on the Atari ST – as for once it was a genuinely classy conversion with as much care and technical trickery as they normally only gave to their Amiga titles. And a cracking action/platform game to boot. And it had hidden *Lemmings*!

jamie_norgan
There are so many great Psygnosis games but my best has to be *Bill's Tomato Game* on the Amiga. It was such a simple idea but it is such a fantastic game with great graphics and very addictive.

markopoloman
Awesome was just awesome! Loved it

Doddsy
Stryx. The intro is so cool and with a bit of practise, the game ain't too bad to play either.

Flabyo
I'd probably say the *Rollcage* games, but there's a slight bias giving I worked at that developer at the time.

commanderkaiser
Bit of a strange one to go for but I'll always have a soft spot for *Rosco McQueen*, there is just something about it that I used to like.

ZeroCipher
I'd have to go for *Barbarian*, *Lemmings* and *WipEout*. Each from a different era of gaming for me but all stick in my mind.

Matt_B
Lemmings is like the elephant in the room, but I'll have to go for *Blood Money*. It was the very first game I loaded up on my, then new, Atari ST and it ushered me into the 16-bit era with open arms.

fulgenzio
Obliterator, as this was one of the first games I saw on the Amiga, and being used to C64 graphics, the look of the game blew me away. Sure, the game now looks terribly outdated, but I remember drooling all over the screenshots. Good old times…

stvd
Destruction Derby, *Alundra* and *Formula 1 '97* were three of my favourite games on the PSone, but I'd have to say *WipEout 2097*. Brilliant at the time but even better now playing on a 50" screen with the sound turned up. Awesome!



» **[Arcade] This is what happens when you rush through the game to capture an image.**

ROBOTRON OR STRIDER?

Dear Darran,
I've been reading through several old issues and have seen that your favourite game occasionally changes. You're currently saying *Strider*, but older issues mention *Robotron: 2084*. So which one is it?

Andrew Joiner

The problem with Darran is that he's very indecisive. He currently says that *Strider* is his favourite game of all time, while *Robotron* is his favourite shooter. It will probably change next month though… Will that do?



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

CRASH AND BURN

Hi Guys

Really enjoyed your recent article on the ST – a very undervalued machine.

Your article on games magazines reminded me of something that even now I can't believe I did. In 1989 I was in the RAF and due to being posted overseas, I ran out of space in my boxes and something had to give. I made the unbelievably stupid decision to throw out all my *Zzap!64* and *C+VG* magazines (including cover cassettes) from Issue 1 to the then-present. The shame.

I feel a bit better now that I have confessed that but it won't, sadly, bring them back.

All the best,

Dave

We're really sorry to hear that, Dave, but we've all made crazy retro decisions. Stuart recently lamented selling his mint copy of *Conker's Bad Fur Day* on the N64, while Darran is still going on about the American SNES and 70 games he traded for an Amiga 1200 in the early Nineties.

ANDROID VS IOS

Dear Retro Gamer,

When are you going to start covering Android games in your magazine? They're much more widespread than Apple's rubbish phone, and there are loads of fantastic games to discover. Please sort it out as I have a £10 bet on with my friend that I want to collect.

Matthew James

We are looking into Android phones, Matthew, but we had such a negative response when we introduced iOS gaming that we're currently shying away from it. If we get more requests we'll certainly consider it.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

The Beatles

Darran received the remastered Beatles boxset for his birthday, so he and Stuart have been listening to the Liverpool four non-stop. Stuart's a massive fan of *Rubber Soul*, while Darran prefers the equally excellent *The White Album*. He's also rather annoyed that *Free As A Bird* doesn't appear anywhere on the 220+ song list.

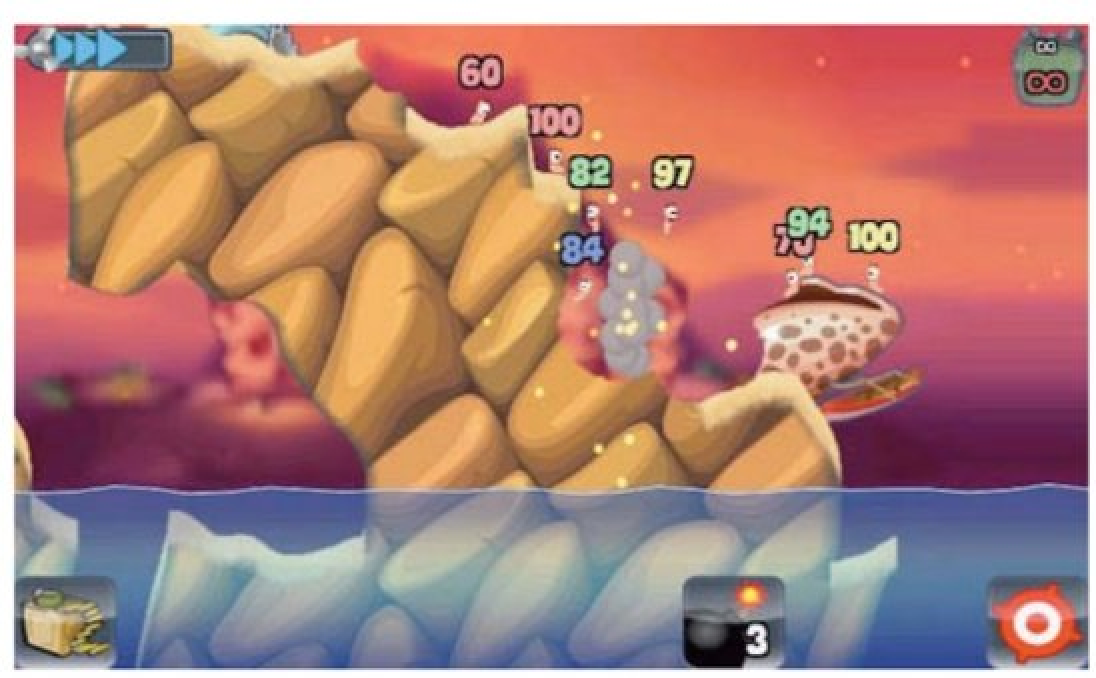
BOARD GAMER

Dear Retro Gamer,

When can we expect a follow-up article to the excellent feature you ran about board games based on videogame franchises? I've been looking around and there are plenty more games you could feature, including *The Legend Of Zelda*.

Dean Robins

We have been looking into it, Dean, and Darran is slowly stockpiling a new selection of games to include. Don't expect to see *The Legend Of Zelda* feature, though, unless a reader can lend us one. Most copies sell for over £100 on eBay. Bit of a shock to the wallet, there.



» [Android] There's apparently an unspoken rule that says once *Worms* appears on a system, that system is viable for coverage in Retro Gamer.

* THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . .

This issue's covers that nearly happened



DARRAN

We've always wanted to try a *Lemmings* cover, so we felt this was a good way of making it happen. But getting *Lemmings* to integrate with the famous logo wasn't working as well as we'd like, so we eventually dropped it and started considering other options.



STUART

It's amazing how the little things can make all the difference. To the untrained eye this cover appears largely identical to our existing one. It lacked punch though, with the logo being extremely dull and a general lack of coverlines that had the relevant impact.





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Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill,
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.retrogamer.net
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor **Darran Jones**
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586237
Editor in Chief **Rick Porter**
Art Editor **Will Shum**
Features Editor **Stuart Hunt**
Sub Editor **Rebecca Richards**
Head of Publishing **Aaron Asadi**
Head of Design **Ross Andrews**

Contributors
Sam Bandah, Lora Barnes, Steve Burns, Richard Burton, Martyn Carroll, Martyn Casserly, Paul Davies, Ashley Day, Paul Drury, Marcus Faint, Marty Goldberg, Jason Kelk, Iain Lee, Graeme Mason, Samuel Roberts, Craig Vaughan, Jonathan Wells, Greg Whitaker

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Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request
Head of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Account Manager Emma Tyrer
☎ 01202 586420
greg.reed@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Advertising Sales Executive Richard Rust
☎ 01202 586436
richard.rust@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International
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Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

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Circulation
Head of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Group Managing Director Damian Butt
Group Finance & Commercial Director Steven Boyd
Group Creative Director Mark Kendrick

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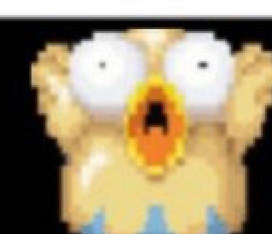
Lode Runner™

James Bratsanos and Doug Smith recall the fascinating evolution of their iconic 8-bit platformer



Mode 7 Heaven

We take a look at the greatest SNES games to utilise the machine's fancy sprite-scaling techniques in Nintendo's much-loved 16-bit console.



Point Blank

Discover how Namco created its craziest party lightgun game, and how it converted it to Sony's PlayStation.

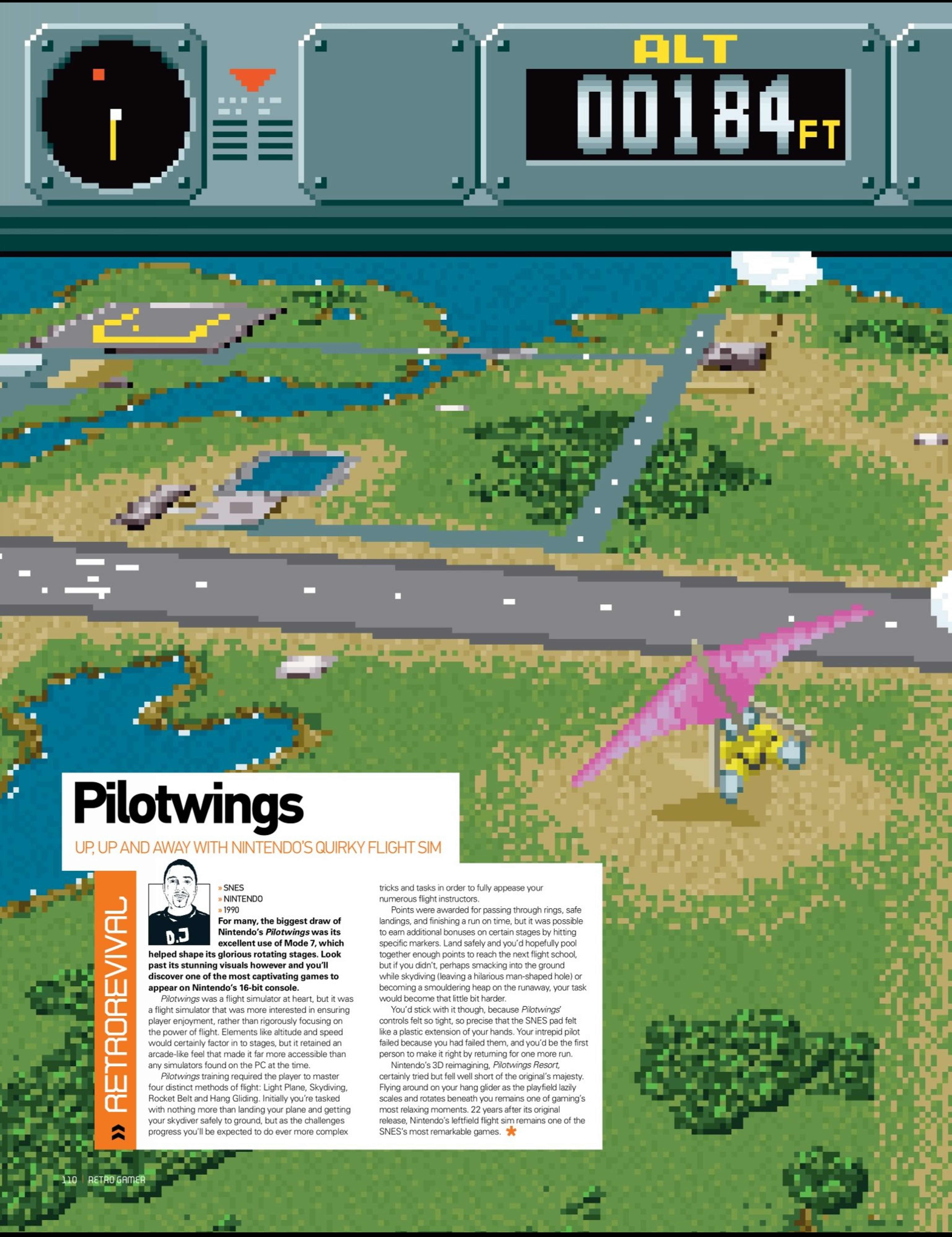


Half-Life

With the recent release of *Black Mesa*, we speak to the creators about this astounding remake and discover the origins of the original game that inspired it.

ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME

Ultimate would have been 30 next month. We celebrate by examining every critical year that the company ran for, before becoming Rare.



RETROREVIVAL

Pilotwings

UP, UP AND AWAY WITH NINTENDO'S QUIRKY FLIGHT SIM

» SNES
» NINTENDO
» 1990

For many, the biggest draw of Nintendo's *Pilotwings* was its excellent use of Mode 7, which helped shape its glorious rotating stages. Look past its stunning visuals however and you'll discover one of the most captivating games to appear on Nintendo's 16-bit console.

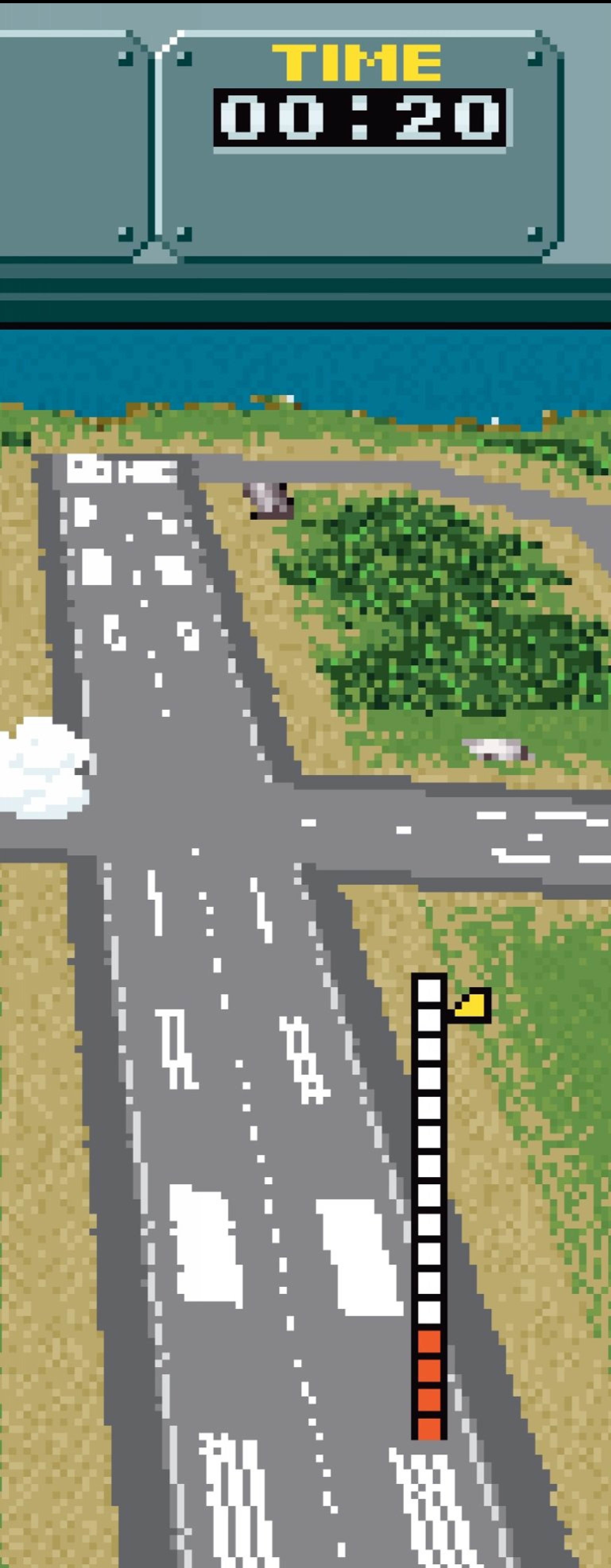
Pilotwings was a flight simulator at heart, but it was a flight simulator that was more interested in ensuring player enjoyment, rather than rigorously focusing on the power of flight. Elements like altitude and speed would certainly factor in to stages, but it retained an arcade-like feel that made it far more accessible than any simulators found on the PC at the time.

Pilotwings training required the player to master four distinct methods of flight: Light Plane, Skydiving, Rocket Belt and Hang Gliding. Initially you're tasked with nothing more than landing your plane and getting your skydiver safely to ground, but as the challenges progress you'll be expected to do ever more complex tricks and tasks in order to fully appease your numerous flight instructors.

Points were awarded for passing through rings, safe landings, and finishing a run on time, but it was possible to earn additional bonuses on certain stages by hitting specific markers. Land safely and you'd hopefully pool together enough points to reach the next flight school, but if you didn't, perhaps smacking into the ground while skydiving (leaving a hilarious man-shaped hole) or becoming a smouldering heap on the runaway, your task would become that little bit harder.

You'd stick with it though, because *Pilotwings*' controls felt so tight, so precise that the SNES pad felt like a plastic extension of your hands. Your intrepid pilot failed because you had failed them, and you'd be the first person to make it right by returning for one more run.

Nintendo's 3D reimagining, *Pilotwings Resort*, certainly tried but fell well short of the original's majesty. Flying around on your hang glider as the playfield lazily scales and rotates beneath you remains one of gaming's most relaxing moments. 22 years after its original release, Nintendo's leftfield flight sim remains one of the SNES's most remarkable games. *


TIME
00:20


Accuracy······70/70PTS.
Ring··········20/20PTS.
Speed·········10/10PTS.
Total········100PTS.
I never expected you to do so well.


ALT
00000FT
00
TIME
01:23
FUEL
GREAT LANDING


ALT
00112FT
48
TIME
00:32
FUEL


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ENDGAME



WORLD HEROES 2: J MAX'S ENDING

» World Heroes was one of the more peculiar brawlers to see release in the Street Fighter II era. Its story tells of a doctor who builds a time machine. The first thing he decides to do with it is arrange a fighting tournament made up (mostly) of historical figures. Making this the only place you'll get to see Jeanne D'Arc trade blows with Erik The Viking



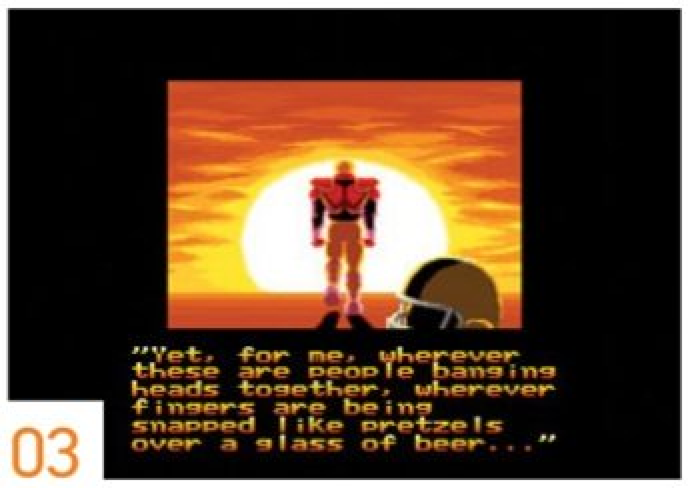
01

» After pasting sub-boss Geegus, who employs that old lame trick of transforming into the other fighters, J Max finally faces Dio – a Guyver rip-off with a mane so shiny it could make Nicky Clarke self-destruct with jealously.



02

» The fight is over and J Max reflects on it. Up to this point he's been illustrated as something of a demonic American football player, but removing his helmet reveals him to be a normal man, of flesh, bone and a Shredded Wheat hairstyle.



03

» Walking dramatically towards the sunset, Max begins to spout some amusing speech in which he touches on head-banging, finger torture, pretzels and beer. Surely a deep and profound statement is forming in his brain. . .



04

» Maybe not. 'Wherever the crowd roars at a linesman's head being rent from his body' doesn't even make any sense. What next, 'Wherever a hotdog gets eaten by a linebacker with overdue library books underwhelming'?



05

» So the 'master of mayhem' finishes his speech and collapses on the floor. Is this a) his fight-weary body giving its last, b) his brain shutting down after concocting such a bizarre speech, or c) both? You'll have to play *World Heroes 2* to find out. We think.



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